DAILY REFLECTIONS FOR CHRISTIANS

VOL. II.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

SHORT READINGS FOR RELIGIOUS

RETREAT CONFERENCES FOR CONVENTS. Series II. and III. Series I. is out of print

VISITS TO JESUS AND MARY

THE CATHOLIC PRAYER BOOK

SWEET SACRAMENT DIVINE

DAILY REFLECTIONS FOR CHRISTIANS

BY THE VERY REV.

FATHER CHARLES COX, O.M.I.

ADMINISTRATOR APOSTOLIC OF THE TRANSVAAL

'Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word of God.'
ST. LUKE iv. 4.

VOL. II.

JULY TO DECEMBER

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PATERNOSTER ROW
LONDON

1914

44433

LAUDETUR JESUS CHRISTUS, ET MARIA IMMACULATA.

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ROME,
22 *Martii* 1913.

Nihil Obstat

HENRICUS S. BOWDEN,
CENSOR DEPUTATUS.

Imprimatur

EDM. CAN. SURMONT
VICARIUS GENERALIS.

WESTMONASTERII
Die 21 *Augusti* 1913

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July 1.

THE SACRED HEART EVER WITH US.

I. THERE are two torrents in the world carrying with them the souls of men—these are the torrent of good and the torrent of evil. There are also voices in the world directing men in different directions, some to what is wise and pleasing to God, and others to what is unprofitable and displeasing to God. The unwise are distracted by the many voices calling to worldliness, and to what is gratifying to the senses, and they are carried away on the torrent of evil. What will save us from imitating the unwise? Religion must be our safeguard. We cannot be good without grace. Grace is ever operating in men's souls in many ways, leading them to what is good, and protecting the just from evil. We see its workings in the inspirations, enlightenment, warnings, and support vouchsafed to us by God's loving providence; we see it in the sorrow and remorse which draw us back to God when we have sinned; and we see it in the fear and love, hope and confidence, fervour and courage, contentment and consolation, which move and assist our soul in the various conditions of life. Let us look to the Sacred Heart of our loving Saviour, ever with us, as the source and treasury of grace, and seek from It the heavenly aid which will save us from evil influences, and support our soul in the path of a good life.

Devout Christian, strive by devotion to the Sacred Heart to ingraft ever more firmly in your soul a true sense of religion.

II. Let us ever admire the fruits of grace, and desire for ourselves a share of them according to our circumstances and needs. The fruits of grace, which should be to us so many tokens and evidences of the love and mercy of the Sacred Heart, are the daily conversions of sinners, the spread of

the faith, the devotion of the faithful, the practice of the works of mercy, the zeal of missionaries, vocations to the holy priesthood and to the religious life, and conformity with God's will under trials. These and countless other fruits of grace show God's work in the world, notwithstanding the infidelity, wickedness, and ingratitude which are met with everywhere, and which seem never to lessen. The Sacred Heart is ever with us, ever loving us, and ever working among us. See it in the Holy Sacraments. The Sacrament of Penance is the Sacrament of Its compassion and mercy; the Holy Eucharist is the Sacrament of Its love. Consider, too, the mystery of the holy Passion of our loving Saviour mystically renewed in the sacrifice of the Mass. The Mass is the bountiful source of blessings in the Church. Let us ever praise and thank the Sacred Heart, which has made such a loving provision for our spiritual welfare, and opened to us so many sources of grace.

Devout Christian, be not remiss in availing yourself of these means of grace. Make it your happiness to correspond with your Saviour's love; then will you feel a relish for devotion, and a distaste for the unreal joys of a worldly life.

III. If there are voices in the world that misguide men, and draw them to what is unwise, there is also ever speaking to us the voice of our Saviour's love. The Sacred Heart, ever with us, speaks to us always for our good. It tells us of God's loving designs in our regard, and of the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption by which we are saved, enriched, and lifted up in dignity and grace. Not only has God taken a human heart, but that heart has been sacrificed for us. Therefore does St. Paul say: 'But you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of our God' (1 Cor. vi. 11). The voice of the Sacred Heart, laden with sorrows, bids us face sorrow with resignation to God's will, and forbids us to set our heart on the empty pleasures and wicked gratifications which ruin so many souls. In other ways also does the Sacred Heart speak to our heart to enlighten it and to comfort it. Like Samuel, we

should say: 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth' (1 Kings iii. 10).

Devout Christian, be not as those who close their ears to the voice of God's word, which is one of the most valuable graces that are offered them. Such as they are often wanting in Christian principle and moral strength. Love every voice which invites you to love God, to trust in Him, and to seek Him in the way directed by our Lord's holy teaching. Beg, through Mary's intercession, a right understanding of the heavenly lessons of the Gospel, and the grace to be ever a dutiful servant of the Sacred Heart.

July 2.

MARY VISITS ELIZABETH.

I. MARY's visit to her cousin St. Elizabeth was an event affording us evident proof of her greatness as well as of her charity. Little did she think, as she departed from Nazareth, that her humility was to be further tried by fresh honours and praises, and by other tokens of God's favour. Her entering Zachary's house and saluting Elizabeth was the signal for precious favours to be granted to Elizabeth and her unborn infant. Both were filled with the Holy Ghost (St. Luke i. 15, 41). Then did Elizabeth cry out with a loud voice, and say to Mary: 'Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord.' O Mary! we rejoice in calling to mind these words of the Gospel. They tell us of thy greatness, and of the reverence due to thee. Thou art the Mother of our Lord, sanctified above all other creatures, and even made to others a messenger of grace.

Devout Christian, learn from St. Elizabeth to show a devout reverence to Mary, and to recall the favours bestowed by God upon the ever-blessed Mother of His own Divine Son.

II. The event of Mary's visit to St. Elizabeth was the occasion upon which Mary, filled with the Holy Ghost, gave vent to her sentiments of praise and gratitude in an admirable canticle which has its place in the daily Office of the Church. Hearing herself declared thrice blessed, she referred all the glory to God, and not to herself, the mere

handmaid who submitted herself to all His good pleasure. But the Holy Ghost at the same time revealed to her the place of honour which God destined for her in the eyes of every generation of men. When Elizabeth had uttered the inspired words of her praises of Mary, Mary said: 'My soul doth magnify the Lord: And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.' She teaches us to praise God for His benefits to us. Is there a day of our lives in which God's bounty has not waited upon us, and provided for us, or enriched us, or protected us? Do not the earth and the firmament, the seasons, the beasts, the talents of our fellow-men, all contribute in due measure to our needs and to our comfort? Are there not many channels and means of spiritual help and blessing bringing to us prolific graces to support our souls and to sanctify our daily life? Let us every day utter our canticle of praise to God's bounty.

Devout Christian, admire Mary's spirit of prayer. Resolve by your fidelity to your appointed daily devotions to seek to testify to your sense of gratitude for God's unceasing bountifulness.

III. Mary's mission to St. Elizabeth was not completed by what occurred upon her arrival at Zachary's house. She had yet to display her charity during three months' residence with her cousin. Mary, sanctified now as a living tabernacle of the Most High, comforted Elizabeth by her presence and society, and by her conversation and kind assistance. Zachary's was the most holy house on the face of the earth: it was the abode of prayer, virtue, and peace. Gabriel and other exalted Angels guarded it. The earth was then greatly blessed, for it already bore the Heavenly King Who was abundantly to enrich it; and Mary, its purest flower of grace, blossomed in its bosom. Of Jesus it was prophesied: 'He shall come down like rain upon the fleece: and as showers falling gently upon the earth. In His days shall justice spring up, and abundance of peace' (Ps. lxxi. 6, 7). The Holy Ghost directed that holy

assembly of God's servants gathered in Zachary's house, even as He ever directs the Church of God in her life and mission among the nations. Mary dwelt in that holy abode during three months, and then returned to Nazareth.

Devout Christian, cherish the society of the pious, in whose heart and life grace pours out its fragrant gifts and favours. Learn from Mary to do acts of kindness as occasion may occur. Men who consider only their own comfort and convenience will often fail to fulfil the claims of charity. Ask Mary, ever so tender in her charity, to obtain for you a sincere love of this virtue, and grace to manifest it in a practical way in your dealings with others.

July 3.

LOVE OF THE SACRED HEART FOR SINNERS.

I. Most touching to the Christian mind and feeling is our blessed Saviour's love for sinners. His Sacred Heart does not cast them off—it yearns for them. Only those are for the time outside the sweet influence and attraction of the Sacred Heart who are hardened in sin, and who have perversely turned away their faces from the light, and withdrawn themselves from their Saviour's love. Yet, by an extraordinary grace, even such as these may be won to conversion. The conversion of hardened sinners is perhaps rare (Heb. x. 26, 27); but Jesus is ever busy by His grace among other sinners. In this we see the tenderness and generosity of the love of His Sacred Heart. We might ask why He troubles Himself about them. They, indeed, gave themselves but little thought about Him when they sinned. They thought only of what they unwisely deemed to be their own gain or advantage, or their own pleasure; but little did they make of the priceless Divine friendship which they lost, of the all-holy grace of God which they despised, of the precious Blood of Jesus which they set at naught, or of the bright crown of heavenly glory to which they abandoned their claim (Heb. x. 29). O sinners, where are your wisdom, your gratitude, your self-respect, and your sense of honour? In your shame, confusion, and sorrow, turn to Jesus, and appeal to the tender mercy of His Sacred Heart. Though every other heart be turned from you, His yet yearns for you.

Devout Christian, thank your loving Saviour for His many mercies. Ever remember His claim to your gratitude. Pray often for the conversion of sinners. Recall God's words: 'Is it My will that a sinner should die, saith

the Lord God, and not that he should be converted from his ways, and live ?' (Ezech. xviii. 23).

II. Consider the fallen sinner's miserable condition. No effort of his own can set him right, if God does not stretch forth His hand to him. If the first and only Redemption had not been of infinite efficacy, a fresh redemption would be needed to save him. No mere human power can raise him up, or wash out the stain, or wipe away the guilt, or take away the disgrace, or avert the punishment, or give back the grace of God, or restore the lost inheritance. Only Jesus can do all this. Will He ? The fallen sinner might say to Him: 'I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee' (St. Luke xv. 21). What a tender and forgiving Heart Jesus must have if He will forget the sinner's outrage against Himself, the many sins committed so heedlessly one after another, and all the sinner's malice and ingratitude; particularly seeing by how many titles He lays claim to the sinner's love ! Before the sinner fell, had not Jesus already shown him countless mercies, and showered upon him favours without stint ? What a large Heart Jesus must have if He will not take into account the number of sinners who have all offered Him the same outrages, and who all need the same mercy ! Do we not know that, notwithstanding all this, Jesus will yet receive and forgive every repentant sinner ? And it is He Himself Who bestows the grace of conversion. If sinners will not close their ears and harden their hearts, He by His grace will call them, lead them to repentance, and help them in the work of their conversion.

Devout Christian, contemplate with admiration and comfort this phase of your Saviour's love. The merciful work of conversion is ever going on in every portion of the world. What a picture of Divine mercy ! O most merciful Heart of Jesus, wounded by countless sins, draw us so to love Thee that we may never more offend Thee.

III. O sinners, happily the day of mercy and salvation has not yet passed. How it should console you to know that Jesus wishes to save you ! Listen to His words: 'For God sent not His Son into the world to judge the

world, but that the world may be saved by Him' (St. John iii. 17); 'They that are well have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: For I came not to call the just, but sinners' (St. Mark ii. 17); 'For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost' (St. Luke xix. 10). When He was on earth, during His missionary career, Jesus drew sinners. To do this, He sat at table with publicans and sinners. It was He Who drew Mary Magdalen to His sacred feet. She was still in the ways of the city when she felt inspired with a sense of her sinfulness and with horror of it. A strange and holy influence came over her heart, and an unseen hand guided her to where Jesus was. There, at His feet, the floodgates of her sorrow burst, and the work of her conversion was fully and finally effected. Since that conversion how many sinners of every class have felt the same influence and attraction, and have been stricken with compunction! Whence came the attraction, and whence the mercy shown, if not from the inexhaustible fountain of mercy and love which ever wells up in the Sacred Heart?

Devout Christian, take the burden of your sins to the Sacred Heart. Pray for true sorrow, and for the grace of perfect amendment. Beseech Mary, immaculate herself, yet the 'Refuge of Sinners,' to obtain for you the rich grace of constancy in your amendment. Recommend to her prayers all whom you know to be careless in the practice of religion, and all sinners generally (St. James v. 19, 20).

July 4.

LOVE OF THE SACRED HEART FOR THE JUST.

I. To the dutiful son the father of the prodigal said: 'Son, thou art always with me, and all I have is thine' (St. Luke xv. 31). These words, betokening so much affection, might be said by our Divine Saviour to every follower who strives to live in dutifulness towards Him. If the sinner is dear to the Sacred Heart, not less so is every devout Christian. Jesus knows who are His, and He watches over them with a special providence. He might say to them what Wisdom says to her followers: 'I love them that love Me' (Prov. viii. 17). If the just are preserved in the path of dutifulness, virtue, and piety, it is owing to the graces that flow from the Sacred Heart. Jesus leads, supports, protects, consoles, and blesses His faithful servants. Aided by His grace, they observe the commandments, they practise the Christian virtues, they confess Christ before men, they bear patiently the trials of life, they resist temptation, they overcome the world, and they tread the path that leads to Heaven. Holy David says: 'The Lord loveth judgment, and will not forsake His Saints: they shall be preserved for ever' (Ps. xxxvi. 28). Graces will continue to flow from the Sacred Heart upon the just, that they may be yet further sanctified, and that they may be prepared for that union with their Saviour in Heaven which shall last for ever.

Devout Christian, pray to the Sacred Heart for the graces you need in the various circumstances of life. Be comforted to reflect that Jesus loves you. Ever praise Him for His bounties.

II. David says: 'Man shall come to a deep heart' (Ps. lxiii. 7). Deep and true in affection, and deeply laden with blessings for His elect, is the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The noble aspirations of the Saints after virtue and Divine charity have not been left unsatiated; nor have devout worshippers been left unrewarded for their piety. We learn from the lives of the Saints how they sought our Lord in the ways of self-denial and good deeds, in the holy way of the Cross, and not in the riches, comforts, or pleasures of the world. They drew the necessary graces from the Sacred Heart. They were rewarded in this life with blessings of contentment and peace. So shall it be with us, if moved by Divine charity we walk in the same ways and despise every evil way. We must love and imitate the meekness and humility of the Sacred Heart, and we must be prepared to drink with Jesus the bitter chalice of the Passion. We shall not be alone, nor will our service go unrewarded. The treasures of the Sacred Heart are inexhaustible, and with them will our souls be rewarded and adorned according to the measure of our love and dutifulness.

Devout Christian, desire for yourself these Divine treasures. Seek our Lord in company with the Saints, and carefully avoid the paths of sinners. It is written: 'Let all that seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee' (Ps. lxix. 5). If in the past you have not understood what love you owed to your loving Saviour, and if you have been heedless in God's service, turn now to the Sacred Heart with true devotion, and consecrate to It your affections and your works.

III. Devotion to the Sacred Heart must not be sentimental or unreal: it must be accompanied with dutifulness and self-denial. Then will it be fruitful in spiritual blessings. One of the secrets of spiritual progress is not to put our own likings before duty. How different would be the case of many men whose lives are faulty and unsatisfactory, if they had only adopted this rule of conduct! How many acts of self-indulgence would have been omitted! How much in their behaviour that was disedifying would have been avoided! and how many acts of piety and charity would have been performed! Would that, though late, they might even now begin to follow that simple but important rule! Now is the time for sacrifice. The more

perfect our sacrifice of our own will and waywardness, and of our likings and leanings, is, the greater will be the security from evil at which we shall arrive, and the greater also will be the fruits of sanctification and peace which we shall store up for ourselves. Life without sacrifice has not upon it the true stamp of Christianity. It will not be a noble life, and it may even be very faulty. Let us learn from the Sacred Heart the Christian spirit of sacrifice which distinguished the Saints from the degenerate servants of a self-indulgent world.

Devout Christian, look upon the Sacred Heart of your Saviour encircled with a crown of thorns, and surmounted with a cross. What does it teach you? Ask Mary to obtain for you a desire to bear all things for Jesus' sake, and the grace of patience under the contradictions and annoyances of life. Fidelity to duty, and patience under crosses will make you dear to the Sacred Heart.

July 5.

LESSONS OF THE SACRED HEART—I.

I. The Sacred Heart of our Divine Saviour is as a book from which we have much to learn. To read this book with profit, we must take it up reverently and lovingly, and read it with attention and respect. Our Lord did not write any book, but He directed men's regard to His Sacred Heart, and said: 'Learn of Me' (St. Matt. xi. 29). In that Sacred Heart we shall learn lessons of every virtue—lessons for every class of Christians. If a man's dispositions are to be judged rather by his heart than by his professions, we should be grateful that our Lord has deigned to reveal to us the admirable qualities and immeasurable love of His Sacred Heart; but in His case every word is a word of immutable truth. What a fund of consoling and instructive knowledge may be found in the book of the Sacred Heart! for that Heart is the well-spring of our Lord's love, mercy, bounty, and compassion. We call to mind how that Heart was in Christ's sacred Passion drained of Its precious and saving Blood, and then pierced with a spear; but that should only make It all the dearer to us, and should make the lessons It teaches sink all the deeper into our hearts.

Devout Christian, let not the lessons of the Sacred Heart be lost on you. Desire to learn them, and pray that you may understand them. Pray especially that you may comprehend what they teach you to be and to do, and beg for grace to put in practice what is required of you.

II. From the study of the Sacred Heart we acquire knowledge. It reveals to us the mysteries of God's love and of His perfections. God reveals Himself to us through the Sacred Humanity which He has assumed. What our Lord is, and the dispositions towards us which He displays, made Man and dwelling among us, tell us what God is,

and how much He loves us; for our Lord said: 'He that believeth in Me, doth not believe in Me, but in Him that sent Me. And he that seeth Me, seeth Him that sent Me' (St. John xii. 44, 45); 'I and the Father are one' (x. 30, 38); 'He that seeth Me, seeth the Father also' (xiv. 9). St. Paul teaches us that God has made His revelation through His Son, Who is the brightness of His glory, and the figure of His substance (Heb. i. 3). If through the book of creation which lies open before our eyes we may come to the knowledge of God's wisdom, power, and other perfections, there must certainly be precious lessons for our instruction written large in the book of the Sacred Heart which lives and beats in the bosom of His Son. Of this knowledge unfolded by the Sacred Heart, St. Paul said: 'I judge not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified' (1 Cor. ii. 2). We may read in the book of the Sacred Heart our Lord's admirable virtues, His devotedness to the will of His Heavenly Father, His zeal for God's glory, His love of us, and His desire of our salvation. In that book we may read lessons of meekness, humility, patience, fortitude, charity, submission, and compassion.

Devout Christian, do not permit yourself to be carried away by passion, self-love, or impatience, but learn in the school of your Divine Master and Model how to humble yourself, how to bear wrongs patiently, and how to conform yourself at all times and in all things to the Divine dispensations.

III. The Sacred Heart of our Saviour embraced with loving compliance all the will of the Heavenly Father in the trying experiences met with in Bethlehem, Egypt, and Nazareth, and in all the scenes of the Passion. What a study It presents for our instruction and example! It should not surprise us if we who are sinners should have many sufferings to endure, yet how bitterly we complain under our trials! We should look upon the innocent Lamb of God led for our sake to the slaughter, silent, patient, and resigned. We should read the lessons taught by the Sacred Heart in all the hardships and sorrows of our Lord's

life on earth. We should listen to the words of our Lord's prayer to His Heavenly Father: 'Not as I will, but as Thou wilt' (St. Matt. xxvi. 39). Christians, when sorrows press heavily upon you, when friends turn coldly away from you, when you have a sense of being alone and unaided, when fortune frowns upon you, when health breaks down, and in all the untoward events of this present life, look upon your Model, study the book of the Sacred Heart, and embrace in a dutiful spirit the dispensations of God's will. You will not be alone; grace will support you. David says: 'Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He will sustain thee: He shall not suffer the just to waver for ever' (Ps. liv. 23).

Devout Christian, remember that the afflicted who are patient under their trials are the friends of God; they resemble Jesus in His sufferings. What an honour it should be deemed to bear the cross together with Jesus! You will be meek and patient if you learn the lessons taught by the Sacred Heart in the scenes of the Passion. Beseech Mary, whose Immaculate heart most resembled the Sacred Heart of her Son, to obtain for you a fervent and practical attraction towards that Divine Heart, and a desire to copy Its virtues.

July 6.

LESSONS OF THE SACRED HEART—II.

I. The Sacred Heart teaches sinners not to despair: It invites them to Itself, as to an overflowing fountain of mercy. Our Lord came to win sinners. Though we may have sinned like the publican, like the prodigal son, like Magdalen, like Peter, or like the thief who was crucified with Christ, we must not lose heart. We must call to mind how grace and salvation came to these. The Sacred Heart gave all Its Blood that sinners might hope, and might have opened to them the door of Divine mercy. Every page of the book of the Sacred Heart reveals the consoling doctrine that our Lord does not wish the death of the sinner. The Sacred Heart does not address sinners in tones of anger and of bitter reproach, but It invites them in persuasive accents to seek God's mercy and to be saved. It is the Heart of the Good Shepherd Who is prepared to go in search of straying sheep, and even to give His life for His sheep. Oh, the gentleness, compassion, and long-suffering of the Sacred Heart! How long will sinners despise Its mercy, and wound Its love?

Devout Christian, calm your misgivings when you think of your faultiness, by calling to mind the lessons of our Lord's dealings with sinners, and His utterances that show His determination to save them. Thank your loving Saviour for all the mercy He has displayed in your regard.

II. During the appointed season of mercy our Lord does not turn away from the sinner, even though his sins are grievous and many. The sinner's whole conduct in his evil courses is opposed to the unspeakable holiness of the Sacred Heart. How opposed to that holiness are sins of envy, hatred, pride, impurity, intemperance, and anger! But, notwithstanding this obvious opposition, the Sacred

Heart yet yearns for sinners, to win them from their evil courses, to wash away their guilt, to restore them to grace, and to lead them to sanctity. How sad would be the case of countless sinners if Jesus did not love them thus ! What a magnificent and beneficent work of grace, displayed in the conversion of sinners, is ever going on around us ! O miserable, impenitent sinners, you despise the riches of the mercy of the Sacred Heart, and bring upon yourselves the unutterable woe which will be your everlasting portion. You despise all the wounds of your Saviour, though they are so many fountains of mercy and sources of infinite atonement, and you go to judgment laden with all your guiltiness. Would that sinners might study the lessons of the Sacred Heart, and turn with remorse and saving sorrow to that mercy-seat of God's compassion !

Devout Christian, read in the book of the Sacred Heart the many histories of our Lord's compassion for sinners, and learn from them the wonderful ways of His love. Praise Him for all His mercies.

III. We learn from the book of the Sacred Heart that the fountains of Divine mercy are not yet exhausted. The voice that pleaded for men from the Cross on Calvary still pleads for them at the right hand of God in Heaven. St. John says: 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just: and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world' (1 St. John ii. 1, 2). The work of absolving sinners, appointed by Christ in His Church (St. John xx. 23), goes on, and it will continue till the end of the world. The Sacred Heart does not weary of showing mercy. Jesus will never despise sinners who with compunction seek compassion and pardon. Every time we raise our eyes to the crucifix, we see the Divine arms extended to receive sinners in their embrace, and the wounded side open to wash them with the precious Blood from their sins, and the whole figure preaches to us a most impressive lesson of Christ's love and mercy. Even to the sinner our Lord seems to say what God of old said to Israel: If a mother should forget her child, 'yet will not I

forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee in My hands' (Isa. xlix. 15, 16).

Devout Christian, be comforted by the lessons the Sacred Heart teaches. Turn a deaf ear to the syren voice of the world and of delusive passions, and seek in the school of the Sacred Heart guidance and instruction to enable you to walk with security in the path of the wise and virtuous. Beg of Mary to obtain for you the grace to love the study of the Sacred Heart, which has so many admirable and comforting lessons to impart. Turn ever to that Heart with love and confidence.

July 7.

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD.

I. Besides the festival of Corpus Christi, we have also in the Church's calendar of festivals that of our Lord's most precious Blood. It is right that we should commemorate with gratitude and joy the blessings conferred upon mankind by the shedding of the precious Blood. Although the ransom paid for us by our Divine Saviour was nothing less than His own most precious Blood, our Lord paid it willingly and fully. As in the case of other mysteries, so in that of the shedding of the precious Blood, there were foreshadowings by types, figures, and prophecies. It was the Blood of the Most Just One, shed by His brethren, prefigured by the blood of the just Abel slain by his brother. It was the Blood of a Victim most acceptable to God, prefigured by the sacrifices of Noe, Abraham, and other patriarchs, most pleasing to God. It was the Blood of the Lamb of God that saved His people, prefigured by the blood of the lamb put on the door-posts of the Israelites, whereby they were saved from the sword of the Destroying Angel. It was the Blood of the Victim that was to save every generation of men, prefigured by the blood of the continual sacrifices of the Old Law poured out upon the altar.

Devout Christian, how wonderful were the ordinances which prepared the world for the mystery of man's redemption! Every epoch of the Old Dispensation is stamped with some preparatory sign. Who shall understand the extent and generosity of God's thought for man's salvation?

II. The ordinances of the Old Law fulfilled the end intended by God; of themselves they were insufficient to bring grace to men. In God's own time they were dispensed with. This was when the Divine Saviour came in His own

person to fulfil the things concerning Him that were written in the Law. 'Sacrifice and oblation Thou didst not desire. . . . Burnt-offering and sin-offering Thou didst not require: then said I, Behold I come' (Ps. xxxix. 7, 8). The precious Blood of our Saviour was of priceless value. How different it was from all the prefigurements! St. Paul wrote: 'You are come . . . to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Testament, and to the sprinkling of Blood, which speaketh better than that of Abel' (Heb. xii. 24). The Blood of Jesus pleaded for mercy and pardon, and not for vengeance. Jesus was 'the Lamb, which was slain from the beginning of the world' (Apoc. xiii. 8). His Blood was efficacious even before it was shed on Calvary. The Elect from the beginning of the world experienced its efficacy, and were saved by it. Our Lord's one Sacrifice was of such all-sufficing value as to take the place of all the sacrifices ordained for various ends under the Old Dispensation. As to those sacrifices, God declared that the victims therein offered were already His own, and that He needed them not; 'for,' He said, 'the world is Mine, and the fulness thereof. Shall I eat the flesh of bullocks? or shall I drink the blood of goats?' (Ps. xlix. 12, 13). But of Jesus, He declared: 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased' (St. Matt. iii. 17).

Devout Christian, recognize how rich you are, seeing that the efficacy of the precious Blood is applied in many ways to your soul, and that you may offer it to God in the Holy Mass for all the ends of sacrifice.

III. How precious was the ransom paid for our souls! St. Peter said: 'You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as gold or silver. . . . But with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled' (1 St. Pet. i. 18, 19). Although our Saviour's Blood was so precious, yet how copiously it was shed! What a lesson in generosity! How earnest a proof of love! The precious Blood poured from our Lord's sacred Body during the agony in the Garden; it was drawn by the lashes of the soldiers in the scourging at the pillar; it spurted from His sacred Head when the thorns of His

mock crown were most cruelly driven into it; it came from His shoulder when bruised and jagged by the heavy Cross; it oozed from the wounds on His knees and limbs when He fell under the Cross; it flowed from His hands and feet when pierced by the rough nails; and finally, after death, the last drop treasured up in His Sacred Heart was drawn from it by the spear driven into His side. The same precious Blood shed for us in the sacred Passion is offered daily for us in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and is partaken of by the faithful in Holy Communion. St. Paul says: 'The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ?' (1 Cor. x. 16). In Heaven the same most precious Blood is ever pleading for us, and by its merits obtaining for us countless graces and blessings.

Devout Christian, often offer to God in your own behalf this precious Blood of your Saviour. It is the source of your Christian hope and comfort. Ask Mary, who was redeemed in a more than ordinary manner, to obtain for you grace to turn to good account the blessings purchased for you by the precious Blood of her Divine Son.

July 8.

FRUITS OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD.

I. The most precious Blood, capable of washing away the sins of all possible worlds, must, when applied to our souls and their needs, effect most wonderful results. It atones for our sins; for it offers to God's outraged majesty, goodness, and justice, perfect satisfaction. The atonement for man's sin was worthy of Him Who offered it, and of Him Who deigned to accept it; and its availableness is of the fullest character for all the redeemed, for nothing can be wanting in the works of God's love and mercy. How consoling is all this for us poor and needy sinners! Through the efficacy of Christ's Blood, the unbelief and wickedness of the Gentiles were pardoned, and the nations were brought into the one saving fold of the Good Shepherd (Eph. ii. 13). Through it, our own souls were cleansed from the stain of original sin in Holy Baptism, and often upon our repentance our many sins have been forgiven. Its efficacy is not limited to the remission of lesser sins, or of a fixed number of sins, but it extends even to sins the most heinous, and to sins without number. St. Paul wrote: 'Without the shedding of blood there is no remission' (Heb. ix. 22); and St. John: 'The Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin' (1 St. John i. 7; Apoc. i. 5). How admirably the teachings of the Holy Scriptures combine to impress upon us this consoling assurance!

Devout Christian, renew your faith in the mystery of your redemption, and seek often to gather its fruits in the Holy Sacraments. St. John wrote: 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just: and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world' (1 St. John ii. 1, 2).

II. The cleansing from sin must be followed by the leading of a good life. Injustice and scandal must be repaired, and religion and virtue must be practised. The service of God demands all this; for, to be genuine, it must be wholehearted. The precious Blood of our Lord merits for us the grace we need to enable us to serve God truly and constantly. St. Paul wrote: 'For if the blood of goats and of oxen, and the ashes of an heifer being sprinkled, sanctify such as are defiled, to the cleansing of the flesh: How much more shall the Blood of Christ . . . cleanse our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God' (Heb. ix. 13, 14). Praise, then, for ever be to the precious Blood! for it not only cleanses us from sin, but it dries up the very sap of sin, and enables us to render to God acceptable service. Therefore do those who have rendered this due service, and passed to their reward, join in the heavenly courts in the hymns of the thousands of thousands who sing: 'The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction' (Apoc. v. 12). They shall not join in this heavenly melody whose lives bear no stamp of holiness; for, alas! there are men who live as though the precious Blood had not been shed for their sanctification. Has it been shed in vain for them? Will its price be demanded at their hands by the Lamb when He shall sit in judgment upon them? Will they then say to the mountains: 'Fall upon us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb?' (Apoc. vi. 16).

Devout Christian, seek to walk ever in the way of holiness of life. How many motives there are to win you to God's service, and to inspire you with fervour therein!

III. Another fruit of the precious Blood is its pleading power at the Judgment Seat in favour of those whom it has redeemed. We are not justified by our own works or merits, apart from the saving and satisfactory merits of Christ's precious Blood. St. Paul says: 'But you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the spirit of our God' (1 Cor. vi. 11). Praised, then, for ever be Christ

our Saviour, through Whom we are made partakers of such all-necessary blessings! We now look forward with confidence to the future. If only we repent of our sins, God will not visit with His anger us who have been cleansed by the Blood of His Son. St. Paul assures us of this where he says: 'God commendeth His charity towards us: because when as yet we were sinners according to the time, Christ died for us: much more, therefore, being now justified by His Blood, shall we be saved from wrath through Him' (Rom. v. 8, 9). From this assurance we joyfully pass on to the consoling words of our Saviour Himself revealed to St. John: 'Blessed are they that wash their robes in the Blood of the Lamb: that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city' (Apoc. xxii. 14).

Devout Christian, approach fervently and frequently the holy Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist. By them your soul is cleansed and nourished to prepare it for the heavenly courts. These Sacraments will convey to it in abundance the fruits of the precious Blood, and secure it against an adverse judgment. Pray to Mary to obtain for you tender devotion to the precious Blood, and lasting gratitude for the benefits received through it.

July 9.

THE DUTY OF PRAYER.

I. One of the first of our Christian duties is to worship God by prayer. Prayer is the voice of the soul addressing itself to God. It is a voice of various harmonious sounds. In prayer we worship God and acknowledge His infinite perfections, we thank Him for His countless benefits, we plead for mercy, and we ask God to help us, and to bestow on us the spiritual and temporal blessings we need. In this is seen its excellence. Prayer is a duty imposed on all intelligent creatures whether in Heaven or on earth. In Heaven it is the ceaseless song of all the blessed giving praise to God, and a pleading for men on earth, and for the souls in Purgatory. The prayers of the just on earth are carried by the Angels before the throne of God (Apoc. viii. 3). There are, we may be sure, many graces which God decrees to give us in answer to prayer, and which will not be bestowed if we do not pray. Christians should therefore be assiduous in this holy exercise. Let not the practice of prayer in common, whether in our churches or in our families, die out amongst us. It tends to mutual help and edification, and it brings God's blessing upon us. Let us remember our Lord's comforting assurance: 'Where there are two or three gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them' (St. Matt. xviii. 20).

Devout Christian, pray to the Holy Ghost to grant you the grace of a practical love of prayer, that you may pray assiduously and fervently. Be faithful to all your usual practices of piety, and often raise your heart to God in prayer.

II. In prayer the mind, withholding itself from distracting thoughts, must fix itself, at least in intention, on God. There must be the intention of praying, and there

must be some effort to avoid distractions, and to occupy the mind with the subject, object, or words of our prayer. This effort need not be strained or harassing; for it is very important that the mind should not be disturbed or wearied, nor should it be vexed by scruples or misgivings concerning the attention that is necessary. What must certainly be avoided are voluntary distractions. Since prayer is the raising of the heart to God, we should endeavour to pray with devotion—in other words, our heart should be in our prayer. The sentiments which should move us in prayer, should be such as the following: the desire to honour God and to please Him by our prayer, reverence for His greatness and Majesty, a filial piety and confidence, and a profound sense of humility and of dependence. These sentiments give a value to our prayers, and render them acceptable to God; and at the same time, they comfort our soul, because they make us feel that our prayers are more than the mere utterances of the lips.

Devout Christian, try so to pray that you may address yourself to God with David, saying: 'Let my prayer be directed as incense in Thy sight: the lifting up of my hands, as evening sacrifice' (Ps. cxl. 2). Can you give better employment to your tongue, mind, and heart, than to use them in praising, thanking, and supplicating God?

III. Christian parents should teach their children to pray as soon as they are able to speak. The tuition will be gradual, but it will lay the foundations of an exercise which must be adhered to during life. All of us should find time every morning and evening to say our prayers. The service of God, and our own daily needs, demand the fulfilment of this duty of piety. Since God is our Creator and Sovereign Lord, our Heavenly Father, our most loving Benefactor, dutifulness towards Him claims the homage of our daily prayer. Since prayer is a certain spiritual food of the soul, and since it is the appointed means of demanding what is necessary for soul and body, we cannot but see how important it is to us to be faithful to the duty of daily prayer. If, then, we neglect this duty, we prove ourselves ungrateful to God, and heedless of our own

welfare. Alas, then, that so many persons fail to pray, that they are ashamed to be seen praying; while others even ridicule any who make a point of being faithful to this duty! How degenerate society has become, when it places religion under such a ban! Even among Catholics, some are found who make time for everything else, but who seem unable to spare time for so important a duty as daily prayer.

Devout Christian, let it be your pleasure as well as your duty, to devote a little time every morning and evening to prayer. Take any opportunity that may arise of inculcating in others the duty of prayer. Ask Mary, the model of fervent prayer, to obtain for you a prayerful spirit, that you may often and devotedly raise your heart to God.

July 10.

THE NECESSITY AND EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

I. We are placed under the necessity of praying, especially if we would obtain spiritual blessings. We must pray at Holy Mass, and when we receive the Holy Sacraments. If we find ourselves spiritually destitute, it must be because we have not prayed, or because we have not prayed with becoming dispositions. We must pray for the supply of our daily needs for soul and body. Our Lord and His Church teach us to pray often, saying: 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Our Lord's exhortation to His Apostles was: 'Watch and pray.' The duty of prayer is inculcated in various places in the Holy Scriptures, and the Church ever impresses it upon us. Prayer is one of the forms of Divine worship which we cannot neglect without sin; and it is one of the principal means by which we are to attain our salvation. Falsely, then, do men say that it may be useful but that it is not necessary. It is both useful and necessary. We must pray if we would obtain grace and mercy. God will not pardon our sins, if we do not express our sorrow, and beseech Him for mercy. When temptations arise, we shall be overcome, if we do not pray for strength to resist them. In these and in other cases of spiritual need, there is an absolute necessity for prayer, if we would be safe, and secure our salvation.

Devout Christian, you have constant need to cry out with David: 'I am needy and poor; O God, help me' (Ps. lxix. 6).

II. Our condition of want, weakness, and helplessness, forces upon us the necessity of addressing ourselves to God in suppliant prayer; for He has made us entirely dependent on Him. We must pray for grace to preserve us from falling into sin, and to enable us to observe God's law and

to comply with all our obligations. We must pray to be defended from our spiritual enemies, and to be safe amid the dangers that surround us. We must pray for our daily bread, for the success of our temporal affairs, and for relief from difficulties and distress. We must pray for patience in our trials, and for resignation under untoward circumstances. As long as we are on earth, there will always be many things to pray for. If we neglect to ask for them by fervent prayer, it should not surprise us if we fail to receive them. We must pray earnestly, frequently, and perseveringly, if we would be heard; but we have the Divine assurance that we shall not pray in vain. Our Lord says: 'All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer believing, you shall receive' (St. Matt. xxi. 22). Our Heavenly Father wishes to bestow on us the bounties of His providence, in that kind and measure which He sees to be best for us; but He wishes us to ask for them. But what do we see? Men will seek favours from their fellow-men, but they will not ask them from Him from Whom all blessings flow.

Devout Christian, recall with gratitude and satisfaction our Lord's words: 'Ask and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you' (St. Matt. vii. 7). Be therefore constant in prayer. Your needs are daily and continual; let, then, your prayer be frequent. St. Paul says: 'Be instant in prayer' (Col. iv. 2).

III. We should not doubt the efficacy of devout prayer (St. James i. 6, 7), particularly if we pray in our Lord's Name. Our Lord gave this assurance to His Apostles: 'Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it you' (St. John xvi. 23). To doubt God's promises, or His power, or His willingness to hear and answer our prayers, would be to doubt God's perfections. When we pray through our Lord, His infinite merits plead in our behalf, and our prayer becomes irresistible. If we would obtain favour with God, let us come before Him with praise, and with our petitions, and let us with grateful hearts bless Him for all His bounties. David says: 'Come let us praise the Lord with joy: let

us joyfully sing to God our Saviour. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving: and make a joyful noise to Him with psalms' (Ps. xciv. 1, 2). Let us also in our prayers call to mind the mysteries of God's love, the sacred sufferings of our Saviour, and the blessedness prepared for the elect. Then will our cold hearts be touched, and we shall be moved to desire to serve God. Prayer will lift up our affections above all that is inordinate and perverse, and in this we shall experience its sweet and powerful efficacy.

Devout Christian, do not weary of addressing yourself to your loving Heavenly Father. Prayer will bring you spiritual and temporal blessings, and prove to your soul a rectifying balance amidst the trials and contradictions of your daily life. Beseech your heavenly Mother Mary to obtain for you a due appreciation of the efficacy of prayer, and the grace to apply yourself ever readily to this sanctifying exercise.

July 11.

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT PRAYER.

I. Prayer is one of the first acts of religion, and it is usually the last. It may be described as the voice of God's child raised to its Father; and the first prayer is the first response to God's love. Constant prayer is a constant manifestation both of faith and of love, and of trust in God's goodness. Prayer is a worship not confined to special times or special places, but possible always and everywhere. Prayer is good, because it makes us good, and procures good things for us. It may be described as good seed, yielding a harvest of heavenly blessings. Why, then, do men not pray? It is because they are wanting in faith and piety, because they do not consider God's loving regard for them, or because they do not value the duty of prayer. Will they not look up to the Saints in glory, and ask how these servants of God overcame their spiritual enemies, clung to the right way, and won their crowns? Would they have done all this without prayer? Does the example of David and of all the just teach men no lesson? David said: 'Seven times a day I have given praise to Thee' (Ps. cxviii. 164). Men who do not pray become spiritually weak and cold, and they lose relish for the service of God.

Devout Christian, remember the example of the Saints, and strive, as they did, to sanctify your days by due attention to prayer at suitable times. St. Augustine says that prayer is the key of Heaven. If you desire heavenly gifts persevere in asking for them in earnest prayer. 'How much more will your Father Who is in Heaven, give good things to them that ask Him?' (St. Matt. vii. 11).

II. If we would pray with fruit to our souls, there must be a certain preparation of heart. It is written:

'Before prayer prepare thy soul: and be not as a man that tempteth God' (Ecclus. xviii. 23). Our Lord warns us not to be as the hypocrites, who, when they pray, wish to be seen and praised by men, nor as the heathens, who set value on long prayers. He says: 'Be not you therefore like to them, for your Father knoweth what is needful for you, before you ask Him' (St. Matt. vi. 8). A man who is carried away by pride, anger, or inordinate affection for creatures, or who remains a slave to intemperance or avarice, is not in proper dispositions to pray. He must be detached from persistent affection for what is an obstacle to grace. To those who are not attached to evil, it should not be difficult to pray well. Certain dispositions are, however, needed to make our prayer acceptable to God, and therefore profitable to ourselves. We must pray with humility, as becomes unworthy suppliants, and with confidence, because of the infinite goodness of God to Whom we pray. We must, moreover, pray with resignation to God's will; because we know that He will answer our prayer in the way that is best, and at the time He sees to be most expedient. Finally, we must pray with constancy, not losing heart, but persevering; for it pleases God that we importune Him with continued and repeated petitions. 'We ought always to pray, and not to faint' (St. Luke xviii. 1; xi. 8).

Devout Christian, address your petitions to God for grace and mercy, with a humble mind and confiding heart. Leave the issue of your prayers to God; but this should not prevent your praying with instance and with continued earnestness (Jer. xxix. 13).

III. Prayer is useful to every class of Christians. God always respects the prayers of the just who hope in Him. He says of the just man: 'He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him' (Ps. xc. 15); and of the prayers of such a servant of God for others it is written: 'The continual prayer of a just man availeth much' (St. James v. 16). The sinner will not be despised when, repenting, he turns to God, and prays for mercy. Our Lord tells us of a publican who, striking his breast, prayed saying: 'O God, be merciful to

me a sinner.' 'This man,' said our Lord, 'went down into his house justified' (St. Luke xviii. 14). We read in David's psalms: 'I said I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord: and Thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin' (Ps. xxxi. 5). Prayer is useful in tribulation, for God says to His servant: 'Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee' (Ps. xlix. 15). The needy and poor, the widow and the orphan, will not pray in vain. It is written: 'The Lord will not accept any person against a poor man, and He will hear the prayer of him that is wronged. He will not despise the prayers of the fatherless: nor the widow, when she poureth out her complaint' (Ecclus. xxxv. 16, 17). In sorrow and in joy, prayer will be profitable, and none are too lowly to be heard. It is written: 'He that adoreth God with joy, shall be accepted, and his prayer shall approach even to the clouds. The prayer of him that humbleth himself, shall pierce the clouds' (Ecclus. xxxv. 20, 21).

Devout Christian, take comfort from these texts of Holy Scripture. Turn to God in all your needs. Every form of prayer renders homage to God, and procures grace in some measure. Ask Mary, your heavenly Mother, to obtain for you a true spirit of prayer, and a readiness to have recourse to God in all your undertakings and in all your trials.

July 12.

WHEN AND HOW WE SHOULD PRAY.

I. Prayer brings God near us, and lifts us up to Him; for when we pray, He does not seem separated from us by the great gulf which exists between the Infinite and us finite beings, but we are drawn close to Him as children to their Father. We are not, then, appalled by the awfulness of His majesty, but attracted by the gentle condescension of His goodness. We approach Him with confidence, remembering that He is 'rich unto all that call upon Him' (Rom. x. 12). Our reverence, confidence, and earnestness and even our importunity, do pleasing homage to His Divine perfections, and win for our souls comforting blessings. When shall we render this homage? How often shall we seek the Divine aid? Happily no undue restriction is placed upon us. We may pray, publicly or secretly, at all times. We should not absent ourselves without reasonable excuse from the public services of the Church, nor should we fail in our private devotions. But at all times we may raise our mind and heart to God, particularly in our trials, needs, and temptations.

Devout Christian, do not make prayer as a tax; let it be to you a pleasant duty and delightful occupation. God invites you to frequent prayer. Do not deny your soul this useful spiritual food. Be happy by prayer to draw near to the Sovereign Good.

II. It is written: 'Come let us adore and fall down: and weep before the Lord that made us. For He is the Lord our God' (Ps. xciv. 6, 7). This homage we may render secretly and often. Let us pray in the morning, at noonday, in the evening, and when we awake at night. Let us in fervent prayer offer to God all we do, and let us pray when we experience difficulties. How critical our con-

dition will be if we fail to pray when exposed to temptation; for our Lord has said: 'Watch ye, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation' (St. Matt. xxvi. 41). Prayer will sanctify our earthly joys, our recreations, and our temporal successes. St. Paul invites us to partake of this spiritual relish, saying: 'Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord' (Eph. v. 19; Col. iii. 16). We should pray also when sorrow weighs us down; for St. James says: 'Is any of you sad? Let him pray' (St. James v. 13). Prayer will then be as balm to the soul; and after we have prayed, we shall feel better prepared to bear the trial that afflicts us. Happy are those Christians who at all times in a dutiful spirit turn to God in all their needs! David says: 'O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee' (Ps. lxxxiii. 13).

Devout Christian, do not fail to seek the rich benefits of daily and frequent prayer. Our Lord has said: 'Ask, and you shall receive: that your joy may be full' (St. John xvi. 24). He has also taught us that our prayer must be made every day; for we are to say: 'Give us *this day* our supersubstantial bread' (St. Matt. vi. 11). Our petition for the Divine bounties should therefore be repeated every day.

III. We must so pray as to make our prayer acceptable to God. It will be acceptable, if made through our blessed Lord. Our Lord assures us of this where He says: 'Amen, amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father any thing in My Name, He will give it you' (St. John xvi. 23). We must yet pray with proper dispositions, particularly with reverence, humility, confidence, and conformity with the Divine will. We must therefore recognize God's greatness and sovereignty, and His wisdom and goodness. Our devotion in prayer should be easy and not constrained; and our attention respectful without being scrupulous. The fervour of our prayer should be rather in our intention than in exterior signs. We must dutifully wait upon the Divine pleasure as to what is sought, and as to the time when the favour shall be bestowed. We should yet con-

tinue to pray, and repeat our petitions; but we should always leave the issue of our prayer to our Heavenly Father, Who disposes all things for the best. Many men, alas ! neglect to pray, and many, too, pray badly. Therefore are they spiritually poor and weak.

Devout Christian, ever bring to your devotions those holy dispositions which will render them pleasing to the Divine Majesty. Frequently turn your mind to God in short ejaculatory prayers: let these spring from a loving and trustful heart. Ask your heavenly Mother Mary to obtain for you a true spirit of prayer, and a sincere desire to sanctify your life by a practice of frequent aspirations and ejaculations addressed to God and to the Heavenly Court.

July 13.

OUR SAVIOUR IS GOD.

I. THE psalms and prophecies of the Old Law taught that the promised Saviour would be God. Gabriel, announcing His coming, said: 'He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High' (St. Luke i. 32). The Gospels tell us that on two occasions the Eternal Father declared that our Saviour was His beloved Son, in Whom He was well pleased. St. John, in his Gospel, declares throughout our Lord's Divinity. That our Saviour was truly the Son of God is a truth which we should bear in mind in considering His life, His Passion, and His teaching. It will inspire us with becoming sentiments of reverence, confidence, love, and gratitude in all our relations with Him. How differently we would view the teachings connected with Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Calvary, if we regarded our Saviour as only man, and not as God! Of Himself He said: 'Before Abraham was made I am' (St. John viii. 58). 'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world' (xvi. 28). Our Saviour, then, is the Eternal, Immense God, infinite in all perfections, Who in His Sonship is in no way less than the Father, but Who for our salvation assumed a created nature. He yet remains ever very God, unchanging and unchangeable, the brightness of His Father's glory, and the figure of His substance (Heb. i. 3), a manifestation to us of the truth, wisdom, love, and goodness of the Father.

Devout Christian, worship ever in your Saviour the Son of God made man. Isaias prophesied: 'Behold a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and His Name shall be called Emmanuel' (Isa. vii. 14), or God with us. Of Him had David sung: 'All kings of the earth shall adore Him: all nations shall serve Him' (Ps. lxxi. 11).

Rejoice, then, in the greatness, majesty, and power of your Saviour.

II. In His human nature our Saviour, true God, atoned for our sins. What a majesty and inconceivable value the Divinity imparted to His sufferings! What immense glory His atonement gave to His Heavenly Father! and how forcibly has it not drawn to Himself man's love! Our Saviour's sufferings and humiliations do not lessen Him in our eyes. No; they exalt Him. We might, indeed, ask if we should love Him as much as we now wish to love Him if He had not endured them for us. O my God, we now say, I love Thee because Thou hast died for me. With what loving devotion our Saviour's followers linger near the scenes of His sacred Passion, contemplate His wounds, and ponder on His pains! Why is this? Is it not because they know that the sacred Victim of all these sufferings is their God, the Author of their being, and their Lord and Master? Holy Church strives to impress us with becoming views and feelings in this matter. Therefore, besides inviting us to the daily Mass, she ever places before our eyes the holy Crucifix, and she introduces into her rites and ceremonies many signs of the Cross. She has appointed the season of Passiontide, and various festivals in honour of the sacred Passion. Our Saviour, being God, understood fully the value and Divine efficacy of all His sufferings, and foresaw the comfort and hope which His faithful followers would derive from them. He foresaw also how His Passion and Death would be commemorated by them throughout all time with grateful and loving devotion.

Devout Christian, let not the extreme ignominy of your Saviour's Passion conceal from you the glorious truth of His Divinity. Although 'upholding all things by the word of His power' (Heb. i. 3), He yet 'humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death' (Phil. ii. 8).

III. The efficacy imparted to our Saviour's atonement, by reason of His Divinity, exists also in equal measure in what He has instituted as means or channels of grace. Wherever the Divinity operates, It operates effectually. The Holy Sacraments are instituted to confer grace upon

those who receive them with becoming dispositions. Being Divine institutions, they cannot fail to be effectual. While admiring the fruits of sanctification which the Holy Sacraments produce in souls, this happy result should not cause us any surprise; for is not grace, viewed in itself, as omnipotent as its Divine Author ? Grace has all the Divine efficacy with which its Author endows it. Therefore, when a penitent sinner brings to the Sacrament of Penance the weighty burden of many grievous sins, and the priest's absolution is pronounced over him, then through the Divine efficacy of the Sacrament are his sins verily forgiven. Christ being God has instituted the Sacrament of Penance for the forgiveness of sins, and this therefore is the effect resulting from its becoming reception. The Divine operations in the other Sacraments are necessarily as efficacious. Where there is the Divine word, or act, or touch, the operation must be effective. All this follows from our Saviour being truly the Son of God.

Devout Christian, praise ever the goodness of your Saviour, Who in so many ways aids your sanctification and comforts your soul. Oh, that all men might receive the light of the true faith, and experience the Divine efficacy of the saving Sacraments ! Beseech Mary, Mother of our Saviour, to obtain for you fervent sentiments of reverence, admiration, gratitude, and love in all your relations with her Divine Son, and grace to profit by the Divine institutions intended for your salvation.

July 14.

OUR LORD EVER WORKING AMONGST US.

I. Before the end of the world it shall falsely be pretended that Christ in person is again on earth. Our Lord warns us against the deception; for we read: 'Then if any man shall say to you: Lo, here is Christ, or there: do not believe him' (St. Matt. xxiv. 23). Our Lord, however, said to His Church: 'Behold I am with you all days' (xxviii. 20). As the Good Shepherd, our Lord, moving men by His grace, is with His sheep. He is ever instructing His disciples, ever leading the just in the paths of virtue and perfection, ever nourishing their souls, and ever calling to sinners to come back to the fold of His grace. His gracious workings for man's salvation ever continue amongst us; but silently and without display. Yet how magnificent and effective are all God's works! The efforts of all the world could not effect what grace is doing in one little child. Our Lord may employ others as ministers or instruments, but the operations of grace are His. Especially do we see His workings amongst us in the office which His Church fulfils in the world. Christ has made her the depository of His teachings, and the dispenser of His Sacraments. Many persons, alas! owing to the circumstances of their birth and bringing-up, are ignorant of the spiritual work of Christ in the world. Others who should be aware of it, have by neglect of religion drifted into unbelief, and disregard it. Oh, that Christ might reign in all hearts, and that all might enjoy to the full the blessings of His grace! How different would the world be then!

Devout Christian, thank our Lord for the spiritual provision which He has made for your soul, that light, strength, healing, and consolation may be imparted to it. Only God can bestow these blessings. If, therefore, you ask whence

you receive them, the answer, to be true, must be that Christ bestows them.

II. Christ is ever teaching the world through His Church. St. Paul says: 'Faith then cometh by hearing: and hearing by the word of Christ' (Rom. x. 17). How, then, does Christ's very word reach us? It is delivered to us by His appointed ministers; and to them our Lord says: 'He that heareth you, heareth me' (St. Luke x. 16). But it is Christ who enlightens us, and gives us grace to believe. His ministers unfold His revealed teaching, and warn, advise, and exhort us in His Name. How happy we should be believing this! Besides instructing us, Christ also comforts us with other blessings. When souls are saved through the graces He bestows, is it not He Who is there to save them? and does He not take complacence in thus gathering the fruits of his redemption? The prophet says: 'The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, He will save: He will rejoice over Thee with gladness' (Soph. iii. 17). Let us have confidence in our Saviour, even when we have sinned. Some men are at enmity with God because of pride of intellect, or because of neglect of religion, and others because of sin resulting from one or other of the vices which rob the soul of grace. These men, and all sinners, need the Divine Physician. Even as our Lord healed men of every kind of corporal infirmity, so, if only they approach Him with proper dispositions, will He heal all sinners of their spiritual disorders. The memory of His sacred Passion, the sight of His Wounds, the triumphs of His grace, the trophies of His mercy, and the terrors of His judgments, are as so many pleadings of the Good Shepherd appealing to sinners to repent. His minister in the Holy Sacrament of Penance absolves in His Name all who truly repent. How consoling are the numberless conversions which are ever being wrought by His grace!

Devout Christian, ever cultivate a spirit of confidence in the love and mercy of Christ. Rejoice with gratitude over the workings of His grace in the world. How great is your own share of the blessings received through them!

III. Our Lord, as the Good Shepherd, feeds His sheep.

We remember how He fed the multitude in the desert: He distributed the food by the hands of the Apostles, but it came from Him. So is it in the Holy Eucharist, in which He bestows upon our souls the food of His own Body and Blood. He distributes this Divine Food by the hands of the priest; but it comes from Him, and it is Himself. O mystery of mysteries! Divine Bounty surpasses Itself. Our Lord says: 'I am the Bread of Life.' What an admirable title He gives Himself! What does He teach us concerning the benefit to be derived from the Holy Eucharist? He says: 'He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me' (St. John vi. 58). It is, then, Himself. The 'Bread of Life' received in the Eucharist is Christ Himself. In this great Sacrament our Lord works wonderful things in the worthy receiver. And what a consoling spectacle is afforded in the Church by the countless priests all over the world, distributing to the faithful in every place this soul-sustaining 'Bread of Life'! Our Lord also dwells by His grace in the souls of the just. Who shall say what aid, protection, and consolation He affords them? All unseen Christ is thus with His disciples, and He imparts to them the blessings of His peace. We know that He loves us, and shall we think that He does not manifest His love? Who shall restrain His bounteous hand when He wishes to bless? He is not far from us, but ever most near. Let us have confident recourse to Him by fervent prayer in all our needs and sorrows.

Devout Christian, seek comfort from the thought of our Lord's workings for the welfare of His elect. Be faithful in calling upon Him, and in employing the means of grace by which He designs to convey His bounties to your soul. Ask Mary, who wishes to see her Son reign in all hearts, to obtain for you grace to correspond with His love, and to have a constant zeal for your spiritual welfare.

July 15.

OUR LORD'S MIRACLES.

I. CHRISTIANS draw comfort from the lessons taught by our Lord's miracles. They witness in them the manifestation of Divine power and compassion. When St. John the Baptist sent disciples to our Lord, our Lord said to them: 'Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again' (St. Matt. xi. 4, 5). We may exclaim with David: 'Come and behold ye the works of the Lord; what wonders He hath done upon earth!' (Ps. xlv. 9). We learn from the consideration of such miracles to look to our Lord in our sufferings and diseases for comfort and relief. We know that He can and will listen to our prayers, and that He will answer them as He shall see best. We worship the Divine Power which wrought such wonders, and we believe that all things are possible to It. We admire the Divine Compassion which moved our Lord to accomplish, and to accomplish with such beneficence and tenderness, those works of mercy. And, finally, we are moved to confidence in our Lord, Whom we regard as man's truest and most constant Benefactor.

Devout Christian, never permit any shadow of mistrust in Christ's power or goodness to fall upon your soul. Praise Him for all His works of mercy and compassion. Let it be your delight to read of and to reflect upon the works of our Lord in healing every form of bodily infirmity, and seek comfort from such consoling manifestations of His goodness.

II. Christians should draw further comfort from the works of Christ in healing men's bodily infirmities when they reflect that such works were accompanied by spiritual benefits. Our Lord came into the world especially to

bestow upon men spiritual gifts of conversion and grace. While He healed their bodily infirmities, He awakened in their hearts some response to grace, He drew men from sin, He created an attraction towards holiness, He conferred the gift of faith, He rekindled spiritual fervour, or He incited some generous resolve in the service of God. He Himself declared that He fulfilled what was written of Him in prophecy: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, wherefore He hath anointed Me, to preach the Gospel to the poor He hath sent Me, to heal the contrite of heart,' etc. (St. Luke iv. 18). Our Lord sought especially in all His works the glory of His Heavenly Father, and the sanctification and salvation of men. When He healed the palsied man, He said to him: 'Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee' (St. Matt. ix. 2). When He healed the ruler's son, it led to the conversion to the faith of the ruler himself and of all his household (St. John iv. 53). Christians should learn from this consideration to set greater value upon their spiritual well-being than upon their bodily health. Of what avail will it be to men to be free from physical infirmities if their soul is at the same time sick with many spiritual diseases?

Devout Christian, seek ever from our Lord the healing of your spiritual infirmities. Bear patiently whatever bodily ailments God may be pleased to try you with, but ever pray to be preserved from pride, sloth, anger, envy, and every vice. These are the real evils that stand in the way of your perfection, and of your peace and happiness.

III. Christians should see in the bodily infirmities which our Lord healed figures of the spiritual infirmities to which men are subject. By Christ's power these latter may be healed, and the healing of the one kind is intended to give assurance as to the healing of the other. If Christ restored sight to the blind, He can also bring men to realize the teachings of faith; if He made the deaf hear, He can cause men to listen to the voice of duty and of conscience; if He gave the power of speech to the dumb, He can move men to confess their sins, to praise God, and to profess their faith; if He made the lame walk, He can bring men to walk

in the way of the commandments and in the path of a devout Christian life; if He cured lepers of their loathsome disease, He can remove the offensive vices of fallen nature; if He restored health to the palsied, He can bring men back from tepidity to fervour; and if He raised the dead to life, He can lift up poor sinners from the grave of mortal sin, and restore them to the life of grace. Let, then, all men raise their eyes with hope and confidence to Christ, who desires above all things their spiritual good.

Devout Christian, never despair of the healing of your spiritual infirmities while you have the power of addressing your fervent appeals to the Sacred Heart of your Lord, so loving and so generous. Never cease to combat your weaknesses, lest they grow and further obstruct your sanctification, if they do not also imperil your salvation. Beseech Mary to obtain from your loving Saviour the remedies you need, and grace to be constant in using them. 'Health of the sick, pray for us.'

July 16.

OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL.

I. TRADITION has it that the ever-blessed Virgin appeared to St. Simon Stock at Cambridge upon his return there from Mount Carmel when he was the Superior-General of his Order. This Saint died in 1265. It is certain that Catholics, from that time, eagerly sought to receive the holy scapular which our Lady is believed to have given to this Saint to be worn by persons in lay conditions of life, as well as by ecclesiastics of every rank and order. Wearers become privileged to partake in the blessings attached to the Carmelite rule of life, and, receiving the holy scapular as our Lady's livery, they become in an especial manner the servants of Mary. Devotion to this holy scapular spread, and it is now universal throughout the Church. It has been the means of fostering piety, devotion to our Lady, purity, and religious observances. There may, indeed, be some wearers of the scapular who are unfaithful to the obligations attached to this devotion; but even these are kept reminded of their obligations and of their unfaithfulness, by the very wearing of this emblem of devotion to Mary. Let us hope that such as these may be won back to better ways.

Devout Christian, love the holy scapular of our Lady of Mount Carmel, and wear it reverently as a token of your consecration to Mary, or at least as a sign of your desire to be in an especial way her child. If you do these things, you may feel happy in the thought that Mary knows that you love her, and that she will show you her favour.

II. The poor and humble appearance of the holy scapular of our Lady of Mount Carmel should teach the pious wearers a spirit of detachment from the world; and the little picture of our Lady usually attached to the scapular should teach

them a spirit of devotedness to our Lady's honour and service. The scapular itself represents the habit worn by the members of the Carmelite Order, to which the wearers are affiliated. St. John tells us that we must not love the world, nor the things of the world; and St. Paul declared of himself that the world was crucified to him, and he to the world. We live in times when the world would hold all men, even the followers of Christ, in bondage to its ideas, to its sentiments, to its ideals, to its fashions, and to its ways. Let the holy scapular be worn as an armour against the spirit of worldliness, and as a token of attachment to the spirit, teachings, and obligations of Christianity. Let not the false philosophy, the riches, the distinctions, or the pleasures of the world, captivate the wearers of the holy scapular, or lead them to neglect their duty to God. As associates of the Carmelite Order, let them be assiduous in prayer and other duties of religion; let them be edifying in their conduct, and let them diffuse around them, to correct worldliness and irreligion, the odour of Christian piety and virtue.

Devout Christian, the way to doing good lies open ever before you. Use your worldly means wisely. Regard yourself as only a steward of the blessings God has entrusted to you. No matter what your position in life may be, ever put your duty to God in the first place. Strive never to pursue any conduct that might offend your heavenly Mother and Protectress.

III. If Catholics wear becomingly the holy scapular of our Lady of Mount Carmel, they may confidently expect Mary's special help and protection. She will shield her servants from the snares of her arch-foe Satan, and from the dangers of worldly seduction. How noble and universal have been Mary's achievements in Christendom during all these centuries! How many her conquests, how glorious her victories! How many sinners her prayers have converted! how many persons who were in error have been brought to the truth! how many of her children she has preserved from ever falling into mortal sin! how many have been maintained in dutifulness amidst the bitter trials

of life! and how many have been led in the paths of sanctity! Many such achievements as these are even now being effected by the reverent wearing of the holy scapular, and by Mary's prayers for her pious servants. Life is a stormy sea; anxious mariners should look up to Mary as the bright star of hope shining out above it; and they should employ as an anchor of safety devotion to her. Mary will save her servants, and bring them to the harbour of peace. She knows what our salvation cost her Divine Son; she was His companion in life, she witnessed the carrying of the Cross, and she saw Him die. She will not allow all this to be in vain, if by any prayer or effort of hers she can save her servants.

Devout Christian, wear the holy scapular with piety that you may secure for yourself Mary's care and protection. Let the wearing of it be a sign that you are zealous for God's honour, for Mary's love, and for your own salvation. Ask Mary ever to regard you as her devoted servant, and to watch over your welfare.

July 17.

MERCIFUL REDEMPTION—I.

I. CONSEQUENT upon man's fall came the unmerited display of God's infinite mercy. Man's first condition was a holy and a happy one, owing to God's gift of justice and other favours. It should have been his unending joy and satisfaction to use the Divine bounties for the ends for which they were bestowed, and to bless God with fervent thankfulness. But the second condition of his existence soon succeeded the first; for man under the temptation of Satan fell into the sin of disobedience to God, and lost his original justice. He was no longer in the state of grace, but in that of sin. He had been previously holy and happy; he became sinful and miserable.

Lament, devout Christian, this sad fall. It opened to mankind the door of evil, and the way of everlasting perdition. If in your own case there ever was a fall into mortal sin, lament it, recognize the evil of it, and once more detest it. God deserved better treatment at your hands. Be resolved never, under any circumstances, to repeat such a fall, and pray for the grace necessary to preserve you from ever committing mortal sin. Let Adam's fall, with its sad consequences, prove a salutary warning to you.

II. With the spectacle of man's fall before you, do you ask if God is angry, and if He will strike man? Will He now, you ask, cast man off for ever, as He did the fallen Angels? No; for by an eternal decree God will send His Son in mercy to be man's Redeemer. The holy writer says He 'hath done with us according to His mercy' (Ecclus. l. 24). 'With the Lord,' says David, 'there is

mercy: and with Him plentiful redemption' (Ps. cxxix. 7). The Divine Son is to be the comforting messenger of mercy. How sadly was mercy needed! without it man's case would have been hopeless. Wonderful are all God's dealings with man. Wonderful was His goodness in creating him, and in all the works of His providence; and even more wonderful is His mercy in decreeing man's redemption, and in accomplishing it by the Incarnation and Death of His own only-begotten Son.

Admire, then, devout Christian, the Divine love and goodness displayed in the decree of man's redemption, in the merciful benefits of which you are called to participate. God does not cast you off, even though to the sin of mankind in Adam you have added your own many sins; but He mercifully invites you to wash your robes in the Blood of the Lamb (Apoc. xxii. 14), and to prepare yourself by a devout life to enjoy the bliss of the heavenly paradise. Ever praise this Divine mercy and goodness.

III. Reflect now upon the mercy displayed in the decree of redemption. Man was powerless to merit mercy: the splendid mercy decreed for him was therefore a gratuitous bounty. Man did not even plead for it. It was a mercy not forced by any extraneous compulsion, or won by any forcible argument, or even solicited by humble prayer: it welled up from the unfathomable and inexhaustible fountain of Divine goodness, compassion, and love. Though in itself of priceless value, it was not without its cost. 'You are bought with a great price' (1 Cor. vi. 20) . . . 'with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled' (1 St. Pet. i. 19). It was a mercy not without efficacy; for it is available to save all mankind, if men will only avail themselves of it.

Admire once more, devout Christian, and praise this Divine mercy displayed in the work of man's redemption; and be filled with unshaken confidence in God's goodness. Does not God desire your salvation, and will He not provide for you every means necessary to secure it? Yes; you feel comforted by the thought of His love and of His good-

ness. You are determined not to neglect the means of salvation; you will not fail to fulfil the necessary conditions; and, humbling yourself on account of your weakness and insufficiency, you will ever pray to God for the grace to enable you to do this. Recommend yourself to Mary, and place yourself with renewed fervour under her powerful protection.

July 18.

MERCIFUL REDEMPTION—II.

I. The mercy displayed in the work of man's redemption came not by the sacrifice of any mere creature, or by the efforts of any merely human benefactor. The Eternal Son of God was not only the consoling messenger of mercy, but He it was who, by the appointment of His Father, should become the Victim to be sacrificed to obtain it. He did not hold back, but He became the willing Victim to atone for man's sin. Through His most meritorious sacrifice adequate satisfaction was offered to God, and reconciliation was honourably effected between God and man. The way to salvation was thus reopened. St. Paul says: 'If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son: much more being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. And not only so; but also we glory in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received reconciliation' (Rom. v. 10, 11).

Cast yourself, devout Christian, in spirit at the feet of your Divine Redeemer to adore Him, to thank Him, and to offer Him yourself, your affections, your works, your life, and all that is yours. Earnestly pledge Him your faithful and constant service; and beseech Him so to aid and protect you by His grace, that you may not put any obstacle to His loving designs for your salvation, but may find your true pleasure in striving to please Him by walking in the paths of dutifulness and piety.

II. Co-operation with grace is a necessary means of salvation in all Christians who have attained the use of reason. A Father of the Church says that we have been created without our co-operation, but we shall not be saved without it. If the Israelites in Egypt would save their firstborn when God was about to visit Pharaoh and

his people with the tenth plague, they had to slay a lamb and put its blood on their door-posts. This condition had to be fulfilled, or their firstborn would have been slain. And when the Israelites who had been bitten by the serpents in the desert, wished to be healed from those bites, Moses had to erect the brazen figure of a serpent upon which they should look in order to be healed (Num. xxi.). It was necessary for their healing that they should fulfil that condition. Thus, too, has God established conditions of our enjoying the fruits of our Lord's redemption. Salvation to the firstborn came through having the blood of the lamb on the door-posts; salvation came to those who were bitten by the serpents by their looking on the brazen serpent; and now salvation comes to all mankind who, having faith and submitting to Christ, accomplish the things that He has enjoined as necessary to salvation.

Value, then, devout Christian, the grace of God which reaches you through prayer and through the Holy Sacraments of the Church; for there is no more valuable treasure than grace. Consider no effort too great by which it may be gained, or regained, and retained. Be prepared to lose health and wealth, position and friends, if these may not be retained except by the loss of grace; for what should be so dear to you as the friendship of God, and what is so important to you as your everlasting salvation ?

III. The price of man's salvation is foretold and prefigured in the two figures from the Old Law which we have just been considering. Reflect now that just as the lamb had to be slain that its blood might be obtained for marking the door-posts, and just as the brass had to be molten and beaten into shape to be formed into the serpent, so, too, had our Divine Redeemer to be buffeted and to be slain, that by the shedding of His precious Blood and by His sufferings and death on the Cross we might be saved. Our Lord, for love of us, nobly faced, accepted, and endured the humiliations and anguish, the pains and cruel death, that were to bring us peace, joy, glory, and everlasting life. His Sacred Heart, full of love, impelled Him to the sacrifice, sustained Him during His Passion,

and made Him the willing Victim for our salvation on the Cross. The riches, the gains, the benefits, and the merits of His sacrifice are all His; but He shares them with us upon the easy condition of our co-operation with His grace and with His loving and merciful designs for our sanctification and salvation.

Devout Christian, make a return of praise and thanksgiving to your loving Redeemer for suffering so much for you, and for dying for your salvation. Let no creature, let no earthly satisfaction, make you forget or be ungrateful to your God Who has given His life for you. Pledge Him your everlasting love and service; and beseech Him to grant you the grace ever to avail yourself of the benefits purchased for you by His sacrifice. Beg of Mary, the ever-blessed Mother of your Redeemer, to obtain for you the grace to be always the true servant of her Son.

July 19.

GOD SEES ALL.

I. God ever sees us all, and all we do. He is the silent witness of our lives. 'In Him we live, move, and have our being' (Acts xvii. 28). When we retire from the society of our fellow-men, we are not really alone, for God is with us. His eye is sleepless, and it sees everything. Listen to David: 'Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend into Heaven, Thou art there: if I descend into Hell, Thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: Even there also shall Thy hand lead me. . . . Perhaps darkness shall cover me. . . . But darkness shall not be dark to Thee' (Ps. cxxxviii. 7-12). God speaking by His prophet, asks: 'Shall a man be hid in secret places and I not see him, saith the Lord? do not I fill Heaven and earth, saith the Lord?' (Jer. xxiii. 24). God sees our good works. He sees our alms-deeds; for our Lord said: 'When thou dost an alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth. That thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father Who seeth in secret will repay thee' (St. Matt. vi. 3, 4). God is equally present to see us when we pray, and when we fast. He sees, too, all the evil that is committed, yet His prophet says: 'Thy eyes are too pure to behold evil, and Thou canst not look on iniquity' (Hab. i. 13). God witnessed the death of Abel, and He said to Cain: 'What hast thou done?' (Gen. iv. 10). So also does He behold every sin that is committed whether publicly or secretly. Our Lord was able to tell the Samaritan woman all the scandals of her life, for He saw all things. Therefore did the woman testify, saying: 'He told me all things whatsoever I have done' (St. John iv. 39).

Devout Christian, never forget that God sees you and your works. Strive that these may be pleasing in His eyes, and take care not to offend Him. Pray that you may pay homage to His presence, by your piety and correct conduct.

II. All men at every period of their life, and at every moment of the day, are under the all-observant eye of God. The psalmist says: 'The eyes of the Lord are upon the just' (Ps. xxxiii. 16). The Divine Creator and Master fixes His loving and merciful glance upon His faithful servants. They are adorned with His grace, and they are temples of the Holy Ghost. The reflection of His own Sanctity, though it may be dim, attracts Him, even in spite of His servants' faultiness. It is not thus in the case of the wicked! Job says of the sinner that God's eyes are upon his ways (Job xxiv. 23); and we read in the prophet Amos: 'Behold the eyes of the Lord are upon the sinful kingdom' (Amos ix. 8). In vain, then, does the sinner say: 'No eye shall see me' (Job xxiv. 15). Let him not delude himself into the belief that darkness or secrecy profit him anything; for his reckoning will be with God, from Whose eyes nothing can be concealed. It is written: 'His eyes are upon the ways of men, and He considereth all their steps,' Job xxxiv. 21); and 'All their works are as the sun in the sight of God: and His eyes are continually upon their ways' (Ecclus. xvii. 16). David describes God as 'the searcher of reins and hearts' (Ps. vii. 10); and the holy writer says of the sinner: 'He knoweth not that the eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most hidden parts' (Ecclus. xxiii. 28). Although men may succeed in deceiving their neighbour, they cannot hide anything from God. He sees and knows their ideas, intentions, desires, regrets, and what are their true sentiments.

Devout Christian, recall from time to time God's presence. Respect it, and seek ever to do what may please God. Recall and reverence the Divine Presence especially

when you pray. At all times God both sees you, and hears you.

III. The thought that God ever sees us ought to have a very beneficial effect. Knowing how God loves us and how worthy He is of all our love, it should comfort us to know and feel that He is with us. We have not far to go, to find whom we may love, and whom we may trust. God will be our support in temptation, trial, and suffering. When these come upon us, we know it is by His permission, that He is at hand, and that He will weigh and measure these trials, and also bestow upon us confidence and patience, that we may bear them profitably for His sake. St. Paul asks : 'If God be for us, who is against us ?' (Rom. viii. 31). The thought that God sees us will, it is to be hoped, deter us from sin; and it should also make us repent without delay if we have had the misfortune to do wrong. David tells us that it is not thus with the sinner. He says: 'The sinner hath provoked the Lord. . . . God is not before his eyes' (Ps. x. (Heb.) 4, 5). The just are incited to fervour, and preserved in dutifulness, by recollecting that God sees them; and this thought also makes them sincere, and truly religious. Let us, then, reflect that God's eye was on us in our earliest days, that it has followed us through life, and that it will be upon us even to the end. It sees us rise in the morning, it witnesses our daily occupations, and it watches us while our eyes are closed in sleep.

Devout Christian, what does your life present to the gaze of this ever-watchful Eye ? Be comforted, and be strengthened, by the thought that God sees you and knows your needs. He will not see you in want, nor will He permit you to be overcome. Ask Mary, your heavenly Patroness and Mother, to obtain for you the grace to be ever true to God, and to offer Him an acceptable service. Such should be the result of recollecting that God ever sees you.

July 20.

SEEKING TO PLEASE GOD.

I. Our first thought or intention in all our life should be to please God. What, then, should bring us sorrow and remorse, should be our having displeased Him. Happy are those Christians who recognize their true relationship to God, and who ever seek to fulfil the duties which this relationship imposes upon them. They realize more than do others what is required by St. Paul where he says: 'Do all to the glory of God' (1 Cor. x. 31). It cannot be said that men understand their duty to God, when they seem not to acknowledge the fulness of God's sway over them, when they wish to retain for themselves independence in various ways, when they murmur at the Divine commands and dispensations, and when they submit, not willingly, but, as it were, under compulsion, because they have no power to do otherwise. Such as these cannot be said to seek to please God at all times and in all things; yet such is what their duty to Him demands. Such as these close their eyes to the real design which God had in creating them. He did not bring them into being to act in opposition to Him, but to promote His glory, to do Him homage, and to be happy in His service. The holy writer says: 'With all thy strength love Him that made thee'; and 'The beginning of the pride of man, is to fall off from God. Because his heart is departed from Him that made him' (Ecclus. vii. 32; x. 14, 15).

Devout Christian, let nothing cause you so much sorrow as to displease God. Accustom yourself to direct your intention at all times to glorify Him by your thoughts, words, and actions. God has said: 'Whosoever shall glorify Me, him will I glorify: but they that despise Me, shall be despised' (1 Kings ii. 30).

II. Because men disregard or misconceive God's claim upon them, they give Him only a stinted homage, and they do not obey Him as they ought. It would almost seem that they hold it too much to devote a certain time every day to prayer, and to assist on Sundays at the public worship offered to God by the Church and faithful. Often, too, they consult their own convenience as to what they will do, or not do, as though they did not owe entire obedience to God's commandments. They do not feel called upon to carry out the Divine will, when this implies labour, or inconvenience. They are unwilling that their duty to God should disarrange their plans, or discompose themselves in their easy-going manner of life. All this manifests a preference for their own will to the Divine will, which is a putting of the creature before the Divine Creator and Sovereign Lord. God is thus denied the royal and full sovereignty which belongs to Him, and He is, as it were, put aside to suit the good pleasure of His own creature. He cannot abet rebellion, He cannot permit Himself to be ignored with impunity; He must maintain His absolute and entire Sovereignty. Holy Job asked: 'Who hath resisted Him, and hath had peace?' (Job ix. 4). If men do not seek to please God, whom do they seek to please? Do they not seem to give to their own waywardness, and to the world, the place in their thoughts and affections which belongs by every right to God?

Devout Christian, lament the perversity of men in not offering to God a devoted and constant worship, and in not submitting dutifully to all His commands and appointments. How ill it will fare with them at their death, if they continue to disregard God's claims upon their faithful service!

III. How far men are from seeking to please God at all times, and in all things, when they wilfully and persistently fall into sin, when they remain in the state of sin without any effort to repent and amend, when they pay no heed to the duties of religion, and when they scarcely ever think of God. God is also to some extent disregarded by persons who, in their different steps in life and in their projects,

never ask themselves what should be regarded as most pleasing to Him; by those who would fain change the order of things established by God's providence; and by those who only study themselves, and not God's good pleasure, in all they do. All such persons should speedily enter into themselves, and pray for the grace to relish, and comply with, everything demanded by God's service. 'Do all to the glory of God.' Since we all are in a condition of complete dependence upon God for every blessing and gift, there should ever be on our part complete and willing submission to all God's ordinances. The holy writer says: 'Follow not in thy strength the desires of thy heart. And say not: How mighty am I! and who shall bring me under for my deeds? for God will surely take revenge' (Ecclus. v. 2, 3). No creatures have been placed in a condition of independence of their Divine Creator: it is therefore the duty of all men to use in God's service their faculties and the means they enjoy, and to seek ever to please Him.

Devout Christian, say with David: 'Shall not my soul be subject to God? for from Him is my salvation' (Ps. lxi. 2). Make it your delight to seek to please God in all your undertakings, and let it be your earnest endeavour ever to live in grace, and to submit yourself to God's good pleasure. Beseech Mary to pray that you may never forget the duties which your relationship to God imposes on you.

July 21.

GOD WATCHES OVER US.

I. Our relations with God as our Creator, our Sovereign, and our Heavenly Father, demand on our part faith, submission, and confidence. We must serve God with a spirit of faith, by recognizing His government of us. He has placed us in a condition of entire dependence. He governs all creation, and all things must come from His hands. He must in all ways carry out His designs, and the world will yet go on, irrespective of what we may determine or wish to do. It is we who are in the hands of God, and not He Who is in ours. Faith teaches us, then, the existence of a Divine Providence over us, and also the Wisdom and Power of God Who watches over us. In His wisdom He has created all things, and given His laws. He has established everything that is round about us, and the firmament that is above us. It is written: 'He hath beautified the glorious works of His wisdom: and He is from eternity to eternity' (Ecclus. xlii. 21). By His power all things have been created, and by it all creation in Heaven and on earth is sustained and preserved. No work of His will ever fail, and no one can turn Him from His purpose, or bring to naught His designs. Let all creation, then, worship, admire, and bless its Creator, Who infinitely surpasses in every excellence the works of His hands.

Devout Christian, join with the blessed in Heaven, and with the just on earth, in rendering praise and thanksgiving to God as your Creator. Having given you being, He has made you an object of His love and care. Say with David: 'Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: and of His greatness there is no end.' Trust yourself dutifully to God's providence, and admire His wisdom and power displayed in all His works.

II. All creatures must submit to God's supreme and everlasting sovereignty. David says: 'Shout with joy to God, all the earth. . . . Who by His power ruleth for ever: His eyes behold all the nations' (Ps. lxv. 1, 7). God has given His law to all nature, and the secret and sublime laws of grace are from Him. 'He spoke, and they were made: He commanded, and they were created. He hath established them for ever, and for ages of ages: He hath made a decree, and it shall not pass away' (Ps. cxlviii. 5, 6). What unbeliever or scoffer at religion has escaped the universal law of death? 'It is appointed unto men once to die' (Heb. ix. 27). Neither shall any man escape the law of resurrection and judgment: 'After this, the judgment.' God is the only life-giver, and no one can escape from His dominion. He says Himself: 'See ye that I alone am, and there is no other God besides Me: I will kill and I will make to live: I will strike, and I will heal, and there is none that can deliver out of My hand' (Deut. xxxii. 39). To God's sovereignty is joined His justice, and His supreme and irresistible power and right to pass irrevocable judgment upon all His creatures, and to give effect to His own sentences. God, then, watches over the whole universe as its sovereign Ruler, and all creatures are amenable to His laws and judgments. He has full power and right to do as He wills, but all His decrees and acts are according to His infinite justice. Our duty of entire submission to God demands that we should observe all His commandments in their entirety, and that we should readily conform our will with His supreme and most just will in all His dispensations in our regard.

Devout Christian, remember that you are ever under the eye of your Divine Lord and Master, and render Him a perfect, willing, and joyful service. When trials press upon you, deem it all for the best, for all God's designs are loving, wise, and merciful. Worship them in both prosperity and adversity.

III. God deserves all our confidence, for He is infinite in goodness. By His own wish and command we address

Him as our Heavenly Father. We are creatures whom He has graciously adopted as His children. David says: 'Commit thy way to the Lord, and trust in Him' (Ps. xxxvi. 5). If He watches over us, it is that He may bless and protect us. He is ready to help us before we think of asking Him to do so, and countless blessings come to us bestowed purely out of His goodness and love. When in our trials we cast our care on Him, it brings us peace of mind. That He Himself should invite us to do this, is one of the tokens of His surpassing goodness (1 St. Pet. v. 7). To God, then, must we have recourse in labour, temptation, and distress. We must not imitate men who fail to do this, but who seek their help and comfort from the world. David says: 'It is good to confide in the Lord, rather than to have confidence in man' (Ps. cxvii. 8); and he finishes his psalm, saying: 'O praise ye the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever.' Confidence will banish undue solicitude, which manifests some want of trust in God's providence. Our Lord warns us against it, where He says: 'Be not solicitous, therefore, saying: What shall we eat: or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? . . . For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things' (St. Matt. vi. 31, 32). We must pray for the supply of all our needs, and we must ourselves use wise effort to provide for them; but our trust in God's goodness will comfort and sustain us while we do these things.

Devout Christian, persevere in the love and service of your Heavenly Father, Whose wisdom will guide you, Whose power will support you, and Whose goodness will comfort you. Pray to Mary, who was more blessed than any other creature, to obtain for you the grace of being ever disposed to partake of the Divine blessings.

July 22.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE FOR THE JUST.

I. In every walk in life there are trials; yet in every case we have to recognize the wisdom and goodness of God's providence for those who love Him. Untoward events have their place in the dispensations of Divine Providence in regard of the just; but the just may not readily perceive the wise reason of such events. Life is said to be a problem. Men often look in the wrong direction for the solution of this problem. Without seeking any solution of it, those who truly love God will also trust in Him, and will leave themselves in His hands. It may be said that all events have relation in some way to the well-being of God's elect. Even the crimes and machinations of the wicked may be permitted by God, in as far as they go for the trial of His servants. The world is not in its government subject to mere chance, but it falls under the Divine plan. In this plan, provision is made for all things, the wickedness of sinners having been fully foreseen. God does not, however, hand to us the key of His governmental plan; but He demands of us a dutiful confidence in His infinite wisdom, power, and goodness. We shall not deserve to be reckoned just if we refuse God this confidence.

Devout Christian, say with St. Paul: 'O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!'(Rom. xi. 33). Submit yourself willingly to God, even when He tries you with sufferings and contradictions. He knows what is best for you.

II. It is our duty to recognize, when nothing succeeds with us, when we suffer bereavement, when some dire calamity occurs, or when we have a visitation of sickness, that these untoward occurrences, just as happier ones,

have their place in the Divine plan for our well-being and profit. The designs of God are not first submitted to men for their consideration and approval, but they are carried out in exercise of the Divine and most complete Sovereignty. To this Supreme Sovereignty the just readily and fully submit themselves, and herein is seen their justice. In this submission, too, is the foundation of their heavenly reward. In some cases the outcome of trials manifests to us even now what we shall recognize most evidently hereafter. Thus we find that often a visitation of sickness or a loss of fortune causes men to turn from an irreligious or scandalous life to one more in keeping with their duty to God. Sometimes God interposes by some unlikely or unexpected circumstance, when death is imminent, but when men are not prepared to die; and He thus saves them, and affords them time for repentance and amendment. Sometimes God permits, through some unpleasant misunderstanding, the breaking-off of a friendship; and this proves a manner of escape from an influence which might be fatal to someone's salvation. In such cases we see reason to bless God for His providence; why will we not extend our gratitude to other cases of trial? for we may be sure that God's wisdom and goodness mark all His dealings with us.

Devout Christian, in your trials say with Heli: 'It is the Lord: let Him do what is good in His sight' (1 Kings iii. 18).

III. It is our duty to fall in with the Divine plan. God's way must be the right way. If the sky be overcast, and the road be rough, what will it matter, provided only that we are on the right way? Is it not written that 'through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God' (Acts xiv. 21)? If only we trust in God's providence firmly, our confidence will be to us a source of consolation and courage under the adverse occurrences of life. Would we foolishly trust in ourselves? Has not experience shown us how seldom the golden plans we formed for ourselves were realized? Were they not thwarted by a turn of the wheel of fortune, by sickness, by interference from without, and even by the inclemency of the weather? Why was there this failure? It was because our plans did

not enter into the Divine plan. Let us, then, mistrust ourselves. We cannot but be right when we desire only God's good pleasure, and submit ourselves willingly and fully to His dispensations. St. Paul assures us, saying : 'To them that love God, all things work together unto good' (Rom. viii. 28). Only let God rule us, guide us, arrange for us, and all will be well. But we must love Him, and submit to His holy will, as well in adversity as in prosperity.

Devout Christian, say confidently with David: 'The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want nothing' (Ps. xxii. 1). In your doubts, perplexities, and necessities pray to God for light and for aid. He will not abandon you. Ask Mary, your heavenly Protectress, to obtain for you a perfect desire of always accomplishing God's will, and a dutiful trust in His providence.

July 23.

'BE NOT SOLICITOUS.'

I. WE are all in the hands of God, Who rules our destiny with goodness, forethought, and love. The wicked, however, oppose themselves to God's designs, and they often presume upon His merciful providence. Even His servants sometimes offend Him by over-solicitude. Our Lord taught His disciples a lesson in confidence in God's providence, when He pointed out what God does for the birds of the air, and for the lilies of the field; and He said to His disciples: 'Be not solicitous' (St. Matt. vi. 31). If we strive to render ourselves worthy of God's blessings, if we have a firm and dutiful trust in God, if we use the means and opportunities with which He provides us, and if we pray to Him in our need, we may then be confident that our Heavenly Father will more surely take care of us, than He does of the birds and flowers. Where is our faith? Does it not teach us all this? Does it not teach us that the wisdom of God, supported always by His infinite power, controls all things? And when events are untoward, does it not assure us that they are permitted for the trial and true welfare of His servants? Provided only that we strive to serve God faithfully, our faith should preserve us from over-solicitude and undue fear. But as to persistent sinners, who refuse to be converted, let them indeed fear God's chastisements; for through their own perversity they bring upon themselves God's wrath and His punishment.

Devout Christian, study with confidence in God's goodness the ways of His providence. Learn to place filial trust in Him. In the dark hour of distress and affliction, give evidence of this trust by humble submission to the dispensations of His providence. The darkest hour is that nearest to the dawn.

II. Confidence in God under the conditions that have been stated will save us from undue solicitude. God Who has given us life, and established conditions under which we must live, will make every necessary provision to enable us to support life under those conditions, and to enable us finally to attain to the destiny for which He has created us. If we look back on our past life, do we not find that a loving Providence has watched over us, and should not this inspire us with confidence that we shall meet with the same Divine care in our future life? And should not this confidence extend even to the time of our after-life, when we pass from this world? For does not God's providence afford us a firm assurance of His love? God's love will continue while we correspond with grace, and direct our steps to our everlasting destiny, and it will be with us when we go into the house of our eternity (Eccles. xii. 5). Our Lord said: 'Be not solicitous, therefore, saying: What shall we eat: or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? . . . For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things' (St. Matt. vi. 31, 32). Certainly the body and life which God has given us are greater gifts than meat and clothing. If, then, He has gratuitously bestowed what is greater, we may feel confident that He will not refuse us what is less, and what is yet necessary to the greater gifts, especially if we seek it by fervent prayer. It is not enough that we should recognize our dependence upon God; we must also refrain from murmuring at His dispensations, and we must put away all mistrust of His providence.

Devout Christian, renew your trust in God's appointments, and look to Him with confidence in all your needs. He is worshipped by your confidence in Him. It is written: 'Blessed be the man that trusteth in the Lord, and the Lord shall be his confidence' (Jer. xvii. 7). In your need, and in your distress, lift up your voice and your heart to God.

III. When men are over-solicitous they offend God in various ways. This fault is seen in the rich as well as in the poor. Fearing that Divine Providence may fail them, some men hoard up their wealth, and fail in charity and

liberality; while others strive too eagerly to make provision for themselves. Inordinate seeking after, or clinging to, this world's goods becomes as a canker to the soul. It is one of the forms of avarice. If it does not lead men to, neglect the duties of religion, it yet dries up devotion and religious feeling. Over-solicitude is often accompanied by mistrust of God, and murmuring at His wise dispensations. Such faults as these may cause God to close His hand, for they offend the best of benefactors. If we were to judge by the expressions of some men, we might think that they deemed themselves wiser than God Himself, and able to arrange things better than He does. How serious, then, may be the faults into which the over-solicitous may fall! In order to make provision for ourselves, we must not neglect the service of God, and we must not deal unjustly with our neighbour. Our Lord says: 'Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and His justice' (St. Matt. vi. 33). God has often provided in wonderful ways for His servants in their needs. Thus was it with Daniel when in the den of lions, and the prophet gave thanks, saying: 'Thou hast remembered me, O God, and Thou hast not forsaken them that love Thee' (Dan. xiv. 37).

Devout Christian, be content with God's providence. If you have but little, be satisfied with little, for it is best for you. Do not trust in your possessions, be they what they may, but put your whole confidence in God, and be not solicitous. It is written: 'He that trusteth in his riches shall fall' (Prov. xi. 28). Ask Mary, your heavenly Patroness, to obtain for you the grace of perfect contentment with all God's dispensations in your regard.

July 24.

INGRATITUDE TO GOD.

I. God has bountifully bestowed His gifts upon men. His children by grace, especially those who, as He foreknows, shall be saved, are the object of His particular providence in the spiritual order. From all does He exact the just debt of gratitude. But, alas! many men who have experienced God's love in countless ways do not make Him a return of love; others who have been similarly blessed do not reflect upon the bounties they have received, and express no thankfulness; others, again, who have been recipients of many benefits, forget them and their Divine Benefactor, and live on in forgetfulness of their indebtedness; while, finally, others repay God's goodness with offences, by committing grave breaches of His commandments, and living in the state of mortal sin. What is all this but ingratitude to God in various degrees? In our gratitude to Him, we might pray to Him, saying: 'O my God, I thank Thee for all Thy love, permit that I may ever love Thee. Thy bounties to me are without number; may I ever reflect upon them, acknowledge them, and prove grateful for them. May I never forget all Thy benefits! And permit not that I should ever offend Thee, Who hast been so good to me.' How many men are there who give expression to such sentiments as these? Considering Who it is that deigns to enrich us with His favours, and to watch over us with a loving and bountiful providence, and who we are whom He thus blesses, should not our whole life be one of praise and thanksgiving to our Divine Benefactor?

Devout Christian, ever acknowledge your indebtedness to God Who has blessed you in countless ways. Say with David: 'What shall I render to the Lord for all the things

He hath rendered to me?' (Ps. cxv. 12). Serve God generously in a spirit of gratitude.

II. It is according to the nature of God's infinite goodness to be bountiful in dealing with His creatures, but ingratitude stays His hand. How can God continue to shower His blessings upon those children of His who do not thank Him for them? David, in Psalm lxxvii., shows forth the ingratitude of his forefathers after leaving Egypt, and how it brought upon them God's anger. Thus he says: 'He brought forth water out of the rock: and made streams to run down as rivers. And they added yet more sin against Him: they provoked the Most High to wrath' (Ps. lxxvii. 16, 17). God wishes the fountains of His goodness to flow unceasingly, but men put an obstacle by their ingratitude. Ingratitude is particularly displeasing to God, because gratitude is that worship of man's heart which is spontaneous. If we offer God gifts, pleasing as they may be to Him, we know that they are already His, for all things are from His hands; but when we offer Him our gratitude, that is our own to offer. It is then highly displeasing to Him when we refuse Him this spontaneous return for His countless benefits. This is what He demands and expects: 'Offer to God the sacrifice of praise. . . . The sacrifice of praise shall glorify Me' (Ps. xlix. 14, 23). Solomon says: 'The Lord hath made all things for Himself' (Prov. xvi. 4). Everything should return in some way to its Divine Author. From His children God expects that, in return for His bounties, they shall give glory to His Name in praise and thanksgiving. What, then, should be said of ungrateful men who turn God's gifts against Himself? How base is not their conduct! Should it surprise us if at length it were to draw down upon themselves a merited punishment?

Devout Christian, lament the baseness of men who are unmindful of their Divine Benefactor. Do not permit any day to pass without thanking God for all His blessings. Offer Him a grateful service.

III. Ingratitude to God merits His punishment in preventing the flow of His graces to the soul, and this leaves

man deprived of those spiritual helps which support and console His spirit. The ungrateful man, if he falls into mortal sin, loses the grace of charity, and with it devotion, spiritual fortitude, a lively faith, and other supernatural gifts and qualities. He then thinks seldom of God, and is but little affected by the holy teachings of religion, or drawn with relish to its practices. In this altered condition his will shows signs of spiritual weakness, and the ungrateful man easily falls into sin. God may say to him, as of old to Jerusalem: 'Because thou hast forgotten Me, and hast cast me off behind thy back, bear thou also thy wickedness' (Ezech. xxiii. 35). How can things go happily with men when God withdraws from them, and leaves them to themselves? There will result spiritual indifference, and perhaps many falls into grievous sin. They may fall away by degrees, and become to such an extent lovers of this world, and of its satisfactions, as to neglect the work of their salvation. Oh, if men who are ungrateful to God would only reflect upon the abundance and magnificence of the Divine bounties, of the loving goodness of their Divine Benefactor, and of the designs of God in His wonderful providence over them; then might their stony hearts be softened and moved to gratitude.

Devout Christian, renew your gratitude frequently by the practice of thanksgiving. By making a return to God in this manner you will open the way to a continuance of His favours. Let your thanksgiving be humble, fervent, and accompanied by a desire to please God in all things. Ask Mary, who is a bright model of gratitude, to obtain for you grace to magnify God ever in union with her and in imitation of her.

July 25.

OUR CONSCIENCE.

I. God has given us an interior light and guide, which is at the same time a voice to the soul. This is our conscience. We may view its various offices, and say of it, that it is more sensitive than the eye, more imperturbable than our reason, more uncontrollable than our nerves, and more retentive than our memory; but it is really both the impression and the expression of our reason. We may try to stifle it, but its impressions received from our reason will remain; and we may even argue against it, but it will yet express itself and make itself heard. The enlightenment of faith accepted by our reason, and the lessons of duty impressed upon our mind, instruct our conscience, and are stored up and retained by it, to enable it to speak to us and guide us by them. What we do with a good conscience is accounted good, and what we do contrary to the dictates of conscience is reckoned wrong; and the degree of rectitude or of malice in what we do is according to the view taken of our motives and actions by our conscience. To desire and seek true enlightenment for our conscience is one of our most important duties.

Devout Christian, desire for yourself a truly enlightened conscience, for you do not love darkness, nor do you wish to be led by a blind guide. Reflect on our Lord's words: 'The light of thy body is thy eye. If thy eye be single, thy whole body will be lightsome: but if it be evil, thy body also will be darksome. Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee, be not darkness. If, then, thy whole body be lightsome, having no part of darkness, the whole shall be lightsome, and as a bright lamp shall enlighten thee' (St. Luke xi. 34-36). Pray for true spiritual enlightenment, and study the teachings of the faith, and the example of our Lord and of the Saints.

II. Christians should ever love a clean conscience, one that is undisturbed by revolt and uncontaminated by malice. We revolt and we do evil when we sin, and we bring a stain upon our conscience. This stain is removed by sincere repentance, and peace of conscience is then restored. What a blessing attends a pure conscience! Our Lord says: 'Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.' Blessed, then, are they who have cleansed their conscience from all sin, from wicked thoughts and desires, from evil passions and unruliness, from every bad intention, and from duplicity and hypocrisy (Corn. à Lap.). How different is the condition of men who have a bad conscience! They are in a state of fear and alarm. After Herod had put St. John the Baptist to death, his conscience filled him with such apprehension that, when he heard of the fame of our Lord, he even fancied that our Lord was St. John come to life again (St. Mark vi. 14, 16). The wicked are in fear and trepidation when any calamity overtakes them, for their conscience bids them dread God's judgment upon them. We see, then, how miserable they are, both in doing what is wrong and causing themselves uneasiness of conscience, and in exposing themselves to present and future evils. How happy, on the contrary, are the just in having a peaceful conscience! Listen to St. Paul: 'Our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity of heart and sincerity of God, and not in carnal wisdom, but in the grace of God, we have conversed in this world' (2 Cor. i. 12).

Devout Christian, though there be wars without, take care that there is peace within. This will not be the case if you bring trouble on your soul by acting against your conscience. A course of rectitude, though attended by occasional faults of frailty incident to our present imperfect condition of being, pursued with constancy, will yield that peace of conscience, without which there is no true happiness.

III. There shall yet be a manifestation of our conscience before the judgment-seat of God. St. Paul tells us that when our Lord will come as Judge, He 'both will bring to

light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts' (1 Cor. iv. 5). Both at our particular judgment and at the general judgment, the secrets of our conscience will be manifested. The seared conscience, the troubled conscience, and the delicate conscience, must all be laid open before the all-seeing eye of the Divine Judge. No pleading and no pretexts will carry weight against His most just judgment. It is written: 'He hath prepared His throne in judgment: and He shall judge the world in equity, He shall judge the people in justice' (Ps. ix. 8, 9). Holy Job says that man 'cannot answer Him one for a thousand' (Job ix. 3). All men may pray with David: 'Who can understand sins? From my secret ones cleanse me, O Lord; and from those of others spare Thy servant' (Ps. xviii. 13, 14). At our judgment the witness against us will be our conscience. If we do not heed it now, it will stand against us then. Now the wicked strive to stifle the voice of conscience, and to conceal from themselves the actual state of their conscience; but then they will have to acknowledge all its incitements which they did not follow, its warnings and its reminders which they disregarded, and its remorse which they despised. Then shall they see, all too late, how fatal was their folly.

Devout Christian, do not omit to examine your conscience, be not deaf to its appeals, and strive ever to preserve a good conscience. Do not defer attention to the affairs of your conscience. Now is the time to make peace with it. Beseech your heavenly mother Mary to obtain for you true sorrow for all your sins, and grace to live in peace with your conscience. There must be rectitude of purpose, avoidance of evil, and zeal for good.

July 26.

THE ORDINANCE OF CONFESSION.

I. THE wisdom and goodness of our Lord in instituting the Holy Sacrament of Penance are well understood and appreciated by all Catholics, especially perhaps by such as have had their conscience burdened with grievous sin. They believe that the same Divine power and authority which were exercised directly by our Lord Himself when He said to the sinner: 'Thy sins are forgiven thee,' are in the Sacrament of Penance exercised in His Name, and by His ordinance; and that, therefore, in the Sacrament sins are truly forgiven. They believe that the blessings bestowed on men in our Lord's own day, and during the lifetime of the holy Apostles, are by Christ's ordinance continued in the world, and enjoyed by all His true followers. Among these blessings is the forgiveness of sins; and in this teaching we profess our faith every time that we recite the Apostles' Creed. We believe that, not to no purpose, and not with any time limit in the application of the power given, did our Lord say to the pastors of His Church: 'Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained' (St. John xx. 23). Our Lord says to us, when we are affected by the leprosy of sin: 'Go, show yourselves to the priests' (St. Luke xvii. 14). In the New Law, priests are appointed not to impose or to carry out certain legal prescriptions in regard of sinners, but in God's Name to absolve penitent sinners from their sins. Herein is seen the superiority of the New Law over the Law of the Old Dispensation.

Devout Christian, thank God that in the Church there is this merciful and consoling ordinance. Admire the goodness of our Lord in providing thus a remedy for our greatest ill.

II. That we may obtain pardon for our sins, it is required that we should make known our need of pardon; therefore must we confess what our sins are. The grace received through the Sacrament of Penance upon the true and humble confession of our sins, with proper dispositions of sorrow and repentance, is the forgiveness of our sins. God, from Whom this forgiveness comes, and from Whom it is asked, although indirectly, has the full right to impose the conditions upon which He will grant it. When we disclose our soul's wounds to our physician, he applies the remedy. When, as criminals, we declare our crimes, the judge does not condemn us, but he reconciles us to God, pronouncing for this benign purpose the potent words of absolution. How much, then, to our advantage is not the confession of our sins! Therefore does St. James command compliance with the Divine ordinance, saying: 'Confess therefore your sins one to another' (St. Jas. v. 16)—that is, to those appointed to the ministry. To priests, to whom is confided the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism, and the consecrating of the Body and Blood of our Lord, is also confided the ministry of absolution from sin in the Sacrament of Penance. To the priests of the Church, then, let sinners go that they may obtain God's forgiveness, and escape from everlasting death. It is written in the Old Testament: 'There is a shame that bringeth sin, and there is a shame that bringeth glory and grace. . . . Be not ashamed to confess thy sins, but submit not thyself to every man for sin' (Ecclus. iv. 25, 31).

Devout Christian, often approach the grace-giving Sacrament of Penance. It will produce purity of heart, and prepare the soul for special gifts of grace. Pray for a lively faith in the efficacy of this Holy Sacrament.

III. It is written: 'He that hideth his sins shall not prosper; but he that shall confess, and forsake them, shall obtain mercy' (Prov. xxviii. 13). These divinely inspired words teach us that there is some special efficacy proceeding from the confession of sins, which is not experienced by those who refuse to confess them. The confession of sin is a deadly blow to pride and self-conceit: it demands a spirit

of sincere humility. In sacramental confession, we have to lay bare our secret and open sins, our offences by thought and desire, as well as those by word or act. How humiliating this is to our sensitive nature! Shame and confusion enter into our dispositions, and make our confession acceptable to God. But our dispositions will not be perfect without sorrow. Contrition is of the very essence of repentance. 'A contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise' (Ps. l. 19). The very unburthening of our conscience in the Sacrament of Penance tends to move us to sorrow as well as to shame, and helps to inspire us with a determination to amend what is faulty. Now this confession of sin, made with true humility and sincere sorrow, is an act of penance, and is accepted by God as an atonement for sin. We may therefore offer it to God, in union with our Lord's infinite satisfaction, as a part satisfaction for the sins of which we are repenting—not, indeed, to obtain remission of the eternal punishment incurred by mortal sin, for this is remitted by the efficacy of the Sacrament, but remission of part of the temporal punishment exacted of us by the Divine Justice.

Devout Christian, in approaching the Holy Sacrament of Penance, seek to do it with sincere dispositions of humility and sorrow, and pray for grace to amend your usual failings. Ask Mary, your heavenly Advocate, to obtain for you a more perfect appreciation of this Divine ordinance of Confession, and greater fervour in availing yourself of it.

July 27.

A GOOD CONFESSION.

I. The Holy Sacrament of Penance is distinctly and above all a merciful dispensation. God has appointed it as a means by which we may obtain relief from the burden of sin and reconciliation with Himself. St. John tells us how our Lord, having risen from the dead, said to His Apostles: 'As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you.' When He had said this, He breathed on them; and He said to them: 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained' (St. John xx. 21-23). This commission and this divinely given power belong to the pastors of the Church to be exercised in favour of repenting sinners to the end of the world. When our souls are afflicted with the leprosy of sin, it is said to us: 'Go, show yourselves to the priests. We have to repent, and to make a good confession. St. John says: 'If we confess our sins; He is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins' (1 St. John i. 9); and St. James says: 'Confess therefore your sins one to another'—that is, to the appointed ministers of the Sacrament of Penance (St. Jas. v. 16). To make a good confession, certain acts are required, and there must be proper dispositions. The usual acts preceding Confession are to pray for the grace of true repentance, and for light to know what sins we have been guilty of; to examine our conscience, and to note our sins and any circumstances in connection with them which it is necessary to confess; and, finally, to excite ourselves to a hearty sorrow for having offended God, and to express it in suitable words. Sorrow will not be sincere, if not accompanied by a firm determination to use all necessary endeavours to do better in the future.

Devout Christian, study in what way you should approach the Holy Sacrament of Penance, and strive to correct any faultiness there may be in your preparation.

II. The great act following the preparation is the Confession itself. Having gone through the usual form of asking the priest's blessing, etc., the penitent should calmly and deliberately, without using ambiguous or misleading terms, declare the sins which burden his conscience. This declaration will not be complete, in the case of mortal sins, if the penitent does not mention both the specific kind of sin that was committed, and the number of times he was guilty of it. The penitent will then accept the penance imposed by the priest, and he will renew his sorrow, and repeat an act of contrition, while the priest pronounces the words of sacramental absolution. The concluding acts will be to return thanks to God for the graces received, and to perform the penance that was imposed. The outward acts must be accompanied by interior dispositions conformable with true repentance. Antecedently there should be sentiments of sorrow and remorse, a desire of God's forgiveness, and a readiness to comply with all the conditions laid down for obtaining pardon and reconciliation. Shame should not keep sinners from confessing their sins. It is written: 'He that hideth his sins, shall not prosper: but he that shall confess and forsake them, shall obtain mercy' (Prov. xxviii. 13); and again: 'Be not ashamed to confess thy sins, but submit not thyself to every man for sin' (Ecclus. iv. 31). Humility and sorrow, if genuine, will carry the sinner through all the acts necessary to the proper and profitable reception of the Sacrament of Penance.

Devout Christian, admire, in the easy terms of forgiveness, the tenderness of the Divine Mercy, and willingly comply with all the conditions. Although, by God's grace, you do not fall into grievous sins, ever bring to your Confessions a sincere sorrow, and a firm purpose to avoid every kind of sin.

III. The Holy Sacrament of Penance is rich in the graces it imparts. What a relief David experienced after his fall, when the prophet Nathan said to him: 'The Lord also

hath taken away thy sin: thou shalt not die' (2 Kings xii. 13)! Like to this relief is the new spirit which the converted sinner feels moving within him after a good confession. The heavy debt is wiped out, the burden on the conscience is removed, God's wrath has been averted, and His love manifests itself in new ways: grace once more adorns the soul, the lost merits are recovered, the right to the heavenly inheritance is restored, and the Father's bounty to the prodigal son is realized. The infinite merits of Christ's precious Blood obtain all these mercies and precious benefits for the truly penitent, and the Holy Sacrament supplies also an antidote against future falls. After confession, therefore, the converted sinner should thank Jesus, the Good Shepherd, for having sought him and bound up his wounds, and he should also make practical resolutions concerning his future conduct. Our Lord said: 'There shall be joy before the Angels of God upon one sinner doing penance' (St. Luke xv. 10). The converted sinner also experiences joy—namely, the joy and satisfaction of reconciliation with God. The just who avail themselves of the grace of the Sacrament of Penance with fervent dispositions draw rich fruits therefrom, and experience spiritual joy upon the forgiveness of their venial sins.

Devout Christian, approach this Holy Sacrament frequently that you may advance in purity of heart and in fervour in God's service. Commend yourself earnestly to Mary at every Confession. Ask her now to obtain for you the grace of a proper appreciation of the Holy Sacrament of Penance, and a sincere desire of its precious fruits.

July 28.

THE MINISTRY OF ABSOLUTION.

I. Our Divine Saviour has conferred upon His followers a wonderful and most useful boon, by instituting in His Church the ministry of absolution. He Himself while on earth forgave sins. He did so as God, and as man. To forgive sins was within the scope of His limitless power as God, and within the scope of His authority and merits as man. His sacred Humanity being hypostatically united to the Divinity, and subsisting in the Person of God the Son, our Lord as man enjoyed by right that supreme authority after God, and that plenitude of excellence including all power, by virtue of which He could Himself directly remit sins, and could also confer upon others the ministry of doing the same in His Name. By reason of the hypostatic union, His merits were of an infinite character and efficacy, and He could therefore merit for men by His supreme satisfaction the forgiveness of their sins. Priests, however, cannot of themselves, and without a Sacrament, produce the effects of the Sacraments. Therefore, in administering the Sacraments, the effect of which is to impart grace, the priest is not the principal cause that produces so happy an effect, but only the instrumental cause. The effect of the Sacraments is interior—namely, justification—and this comes only from God (Rom. viii. 33). But God may employ ministers to act in His Name. Christ, Who is God, has done this. In absolution, in the Sacrament of Penance, our Lord as the principal Agent imparts the forgiveness of sin; but He has ordained that this effect shall be produced through the instrumentality of the appointed minister (St. John xx. 22, 23).

Devout Christian, admire the wisdom and goodness of

the Divine dispensations. Thank our Lord for having committed to the Church the power of absolving from sin in His Name.

II. Grace is not less real, nor less efficacious, because it reaches us not directly from God, but through the means of a Sacrament administered by a priest. The miracles wrought by the Apostles were just as real as those wrought by our Divine Lord Himself: in every case the power exercised was God's. Thus St. Peter (Acts iii. 6) as truly caused the lame man to walk, as did our Lord the palsied man (St. Matt. ix. 6); but what the Apostle did, he did in Christ's Name. Thus, too, is it with the power exercised in absolving from sin. Our Lord said to the palsied man: 'Thy sins are forgiven thee;' and in the Sacrament of Penance, the minister says in Christ's Name and by His appointment: 'I absolve thee from thy sins.' When the priest pronounces these words over the truly penitent, then, and by the efficacy which Christ has given to the Sacrament, are the penitent's sins actually forgiven. How great is Christ's goodness in appointing to this ministry, not one priest in the Church, not one priest in every country, but countless priests spread all over the world! Christ has not pent up the healing waters of His mercy within any narrow channel, but He has opened the flood-gates, and the saving waters are flowing everywhere. Cleansed in these waters by sincere repentance, the souls of countless pardoned sinners rejoice again in the peace and friendship of God, and enjoy again the hope of the eternal inheritance.

Devout Christian, use the Holy Sacrament of Penance frequently and piously. It will serve as a powerful means to perseverance in grace, and to advancement in virtue and piety.

III. What a boon is absolution to the conscience that was burdened with grievous sin! It cleanses the soul from its defilement, it removes the sentence of everlasting death, it gives power to resist the forces of evil, and it restores charity with its spiritual gifts and adornments. What comfort, too, is absolution to faithful souls desirous

of ever pleasing God! The burden of their lesser sins is taken off their conscience, they rejoice in the grace of forgiveness, they experience a fresh impulse to love God, and they are moved to greater watchfulness and fidelity in serving Him. It is sad that many men who are most burdened with sins, and held captive by vicious habits, and who therefore have special reason to seek absolution and the aids of the Holy Sacrament of Penance, are the very ones who keep away from confession. How different would be their lives, if only they repented of their sins and sought for absolution! How changed would be their hearts, and how blessed would they be, if only they approached the Sacrament of Penance, to have applied to their souls the infinite efficacy of Christ's sacred and saving Passion, and to hear the sacramental words of pardon!

Devout Christian, pray for the conversion of sinners. Compassionate the Sacred Heart of Jesus, outraged by their evil deeds, and by the coldness of their perverted hearts. Thank your loving Saviour for all the graces He has so mercifully bestowed on you through the many sacramental absolutions which you have received. Pray to Mary to obtain for you a true spirit of compunction, and a sincere desire of profiting by the Holy Sacrament of Penance.

July 29.

SATISFACTION.

I. An integral, though not an essential, part of the Sacrament of Penance, is the imposition by the priest of a sacramental penance, and the acceptance of it, and performance of it, by the penitent. Intentional neglect in this matter by the priest, or by the penitent, would be sinful. This penance is termed satisfaction. The object of it is to offer some amends for the injury done to God by the commission of sin, and some atonement in place of the greater punishment actually merited on account of our sins. This satisfaction duly rendered is evidence of the sincerity of our sorrow at having offended God. After the remission of the everlasting punishment incurred by mortal sin, there often remains a debt of temporal punishment, to be discharged either in this world or in the next. As to the everlasting punishment we of ourselves could not possibly satisfy in any way that debt: the remission of it, which actually takes place in the Sacrament of Penance worthily received, depends entirely upon God's infinite mercy and goodness, and upon the precious merits of Jesus Christ, our Divine Saviour, applied to our soul in the Holy Sacrament. As to the debt of temporal punishment, we may, in view of the same precious merits of our Lord, satisfy for them in this life by good works, by penance, or by indulgences; but, if not fully satisfied for in this way before death, we must pass for a time into Purgatory, and there render satisfaction by our sufferings.

Devout Christian, reflect upon this duty of satisfying for sin; and be resolved to accept with a ready spirit the penance imposed in the Sacrament of Penance, and to perform it dutifully and with sentiments of compunction.

II. In treating of the satisfaction we offer to God for

sin, we must always recognize our own impotence and unworthiness. In the words of the Council of Trent, no Catholic ever thought that by this kind of satisfaction on our part, the efficacy of the merit and of the satisfaction of our Lord Jesus Christ is either obscured, or in any way lessened. The perpetual practice of imposing sacramental penances follows our faith as to the need of satisfaction; for we believe that, instead of the punishment claimed by God's wrath, unappeased by repentance before Penance, there remains, after Penance, due by us to God's justice, only a debt of temporal punishment. In acknowledgement of this debt, and in part satisfaction, the confessor imposes a penance upon the penitent. The penance thus imposed has special value and efficacy, because of its sacramental character; other voluntary satisfaction derives its value chiefly from our dispositions. As to the amount of temporal punishment remitted by the performance of a sacramental penance, it will depend both on the nature of the penance imposed, and on our dispositions in acquitting ourselves of it. The Council of Trent teaches that we receive justice, everyone according to his own measure, and according to everyone's proper dispositions and co-operation. It may therefore happen that sometimes the whole of the temporal punishment will be remitted; as in the case of a penitent bringing to the reception of the Sacrament a vehement contrition and charity; but of this happy result no man can judge.

Devout Christian, strive to render your dispositions in receiving the Sacrament of Penance as perfect as possible, that this happy result may occur in your case.

III. Holy Church teaches that, after the guilt of sin has been remitted, we may obtain remittance of the temporal punishment that remains due, by performing laborious works of penance. We have confirmation of this doctrine in the case of the Ninivites, who averted the punishment with which God threatened them, by their voluntary fasting and prayer. It is further confirmed by the words of St. John the Baptist: 'Bring forth, therefore, fruit worthy of penance.' Works of penance would not be so strongly

recommended, if God would not be appeased by them, and if the temporal punishment due to sin would not be remitted by them. Sacramental penance is meritorious for us because of our humble acceptance of it, and for other reasons. Thus, it acts as a remedy against those propensities which the commission of sin has perhaps given force to; if performed in a proper spirit it may act as a check to sin; it turns aside God's chastisements; and it represents, in a manner, suffering for sin, making us conformable to our Lord Who thus suffered. The effort to atone for sin should also afford us an assurance of our being in the path of salvation, for we are endeavouring to remove what is undoubtedly an impediment to the speedy attainment of the heavenly reward.

Devout Christian, be zealous to combat every obstacle to grace, and to further every work that will bring you nearer to God. Be not like those insincere or thoughtless penitents who do not love penance, and who do little or nothing to atone for sin. Beseech Mary, the refuge of true penitents, to obtain for you a spirit of compunction, and a practical desire to put away from you the remains of sin, and to complete your satisfaction for sin during this present life.

July 30.

INDULGENCES.

I. Among the many ways by which Holy Church encourages her children to practise piety and good works, is her profuse granting of indulgences. These are usually granted upon the condition of the reception of the Holy Sacraments, visits to particular churches or shrines, the recitation of certain prayers, or the performance of some of the works of mercy. Out of the treasury of Christ's infinite merits and of the superabundant merits of His holy Mother and of the Saints, the Church bestows these spiritual blessings upon her children who seek them and who make themselves worthy of them. They are not bestowed upon those who are in mortal sin; and an indulgence does not remit mortal sin; nor of itself does it remit the guilt of any sin. An indulgence is a remission of the temporal punishment that may remain due to the infinite justice of God after the guilt of sin has been forgiven; and this remission is granted by the Church to her children by virtue of the powers confided to her by our Blessed Lord. The Church does not grant indulgences to any who are not visibly within her fold. We should admire the merciful provision made by our Divine Saviour for freeing us from the sad effects of our sins; this provision is witnessed especially in the Holy Sacrament of Penance, and in the granting of indulgences.

Devout Christian, rejoice in God's merciful dispensations, and seek ever to be worthy to avail yourself of them. Desire to render satisfaction for your sins, not only by your patient endurance of your trials and sufferings, and by greater fidelity in fulfilling your religious duties and the duties of your state in life, but also by availing yourself of the indulgences granted by the Church. Let it

be your constant effort to free yourself of your debt to God's infinite justice.

II. Our Lord endowed the Church with the power of granting indulgences, especially when He said to St. Peter: 'I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in Heaven' (St. Matt. xvi. 19). By these words our Lord gave extensive powers to the Head of His Church. When we consider that the Church, through the Holy Sacrament of Penance, remits mortal sin and the eternal punishment due to it, it should not surprise us that she also, by virtue of the powers given to her, remits temporal punishment. These powers were used by St. Paul when he released the sinful Corinthian from the ban of excommunication, which, by virtue of the power of binding, he had placed upon him. Upon that occasion St. Paul said: 'What I have pardoned, if I have pardoned anything, for your sakes have I done it in the person of Christ' (2 Cor. ii. 10). It rests with the Church to lay down the conditions upon which she grants indulgences; and these conditions may, according to the discretion of the supreme ruler of the Church, be easy or difficult. At the present time they are usually easier than in the earlier ages of the Church; but the dispositions of the faithful, which are particularly necessary for the gaining of the indulgence, should be the same now even as in those early ages. Christians desirous of gaining indulgences should be impressed with feelings of faith, piety, and compunction, accompanied by an earnest desire to gain them.

Devout Christian, recognize in the practice of gaining indulgences the exercise of several exalted virtues—namely, of faith, hope, charity, and religion. How excellent, then, this practice must be! Thank our Lord for the consoling gifts and powers which He has left with His Church, and for imparting upon such easy terms the remission of the punishment due to sin. Praise the wonders of God's goodness and mercy.

III. Christians should be ever actuated by a lively faith in all that concerns the practice of their religion. Some weak Christians do not enter, heart and soul, into this practice; they seem to stand aloof, as though they only half believed, or as though they feared some imposture. In the matter of indulgences they must believe that Christ has given to His Church the power of granting them, and that if they gain them, a certain remission of temporal punishment follows: this remission may be entire, or only partial—and it depends upon the nature of the indulgence granted, upon the fulfilment of the conditions, and upon the dispositions of the person seeking to gain it. There is no imposture about all this; but the extent of the remission actually attained is known only to God. Whatever is gained results in the lessening or mitigation of the temporary punishment due to sin, and even, in certain cases, in the entire remission of such punishment. Faith teaches us that whatever punishment is not remitted in this life, must be endured in Purgatory in the life to come. As in this life we are in a time of merit and of mercy, and as our satisfactions are in some sense voluntary, the terms of remission are now less rigorous than they will be in the future life, when the satisfaction to be rendered will be fixed by a decree of God's justice. The sufferings in Purgatory are very severe, and Purgatory is that prison out of which we shall not pass until we shall have paid the last farthing (St. Matt. v. 26).

Devout Christian, be not unmindful of the satisfaction you now owe to God's justice; how much you owe is unknown to you. 'Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes' (St. Matt. v. 25). Seek to render the satisfaction by gaining indulgences. Pray to Mary to obtain for you the necessary dispositions for gaining them. How happy will you not be upon the great accounting day at your death, if you learn that, by gaining indulgences, you have satisfied the claims of God's justice!

July 31.

ST. IGNATIUS.

I. The benign efficacy of grace is seen in the conversion of men of worldly views and aims to a life lustrous with Christian virtue. Such a conversion was that of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the holy Founder of the Society of Jesus. Until his thirtieth year, he loved the glory of the world. Grace then did a holy violence to his soul, and he began to lead a life of penance and prayer, and to practise in an eminent degree the holy virtues of humility, obedience, and charity. He never desisted from his holy purposes during the remaining thirty-five years of his life, but rather advanced day by day in the path of sanctity. His early training in the military art, the glory he won as a dashing officer, and the worldly character of his social surroundings, might seem to us to portend for Ignatius little promise of any great work in the Church; but God had His designs in his regard. God seems to us often to use unlikely and unsuitable means for great purposes, and we are forced to admit and admire the marvellous efficacy of grace. While under surgical treatment for injuries received in a battle in which he greatly distinguished himself, there fell into Ignatius's hands the history of the lives of some of the Saints. Reading it, there opened to his vision other conquests and other battles than those he had previously desired. He wished to conquer his own spirit, and to do battle in the service of God; and he aspired to receive the crown of the Saints.

Devout Christian, admire the work of grace in the conversion of St. Ignatius. Beware of the false charms of the world, and seek in all your life to imitate the virtues of the Saints.

II. Ignatius, upon his conversion, began at once a

course of severe mortification. He put off the fine attire suitable to his rank, and wore a coarse pilgrim's robe, and disdaining all dainties, he practised fasting and abstinence, using for the most part only bread and water. By these and other severe penitential practices joined to continual prayer and meditation, he laid the foundation of the eminent sanctity to which he afterwards attained. Judging by the readiness with which he both received and sought rebuffs and humiliations, the sincerity of his humility, the thoroughness of his spirit of penance, and the solid character of the mysticism revealed in his 'Spiritual Exercises,' it might be said that even at his conversion from worldliness grace had already made him a Saint. After ten months spent at Manresa, St. Ignatius voyaged to Palestine, and then returned to Barcelona, where, at the age of thirty-three years, he humbly took his place among youthful scholars to acquire the education necessary for higher studies. Later on, he made these higher studies at Paris, and there he founded his Order, to which he afterwards gave the name of the 'Society of Jesus.' At the age of forty-six years he received priestly ordination. He and his companions afterwards visited Rome, and offered themselves to the Pope for Apostolic work.

Devout Christian, admire the humble beginnings of great sanctity, and of a great institution in the Church of God. Recall our Lord's words: 'Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground, die; Itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit' (St. John xii. 24, 25). Just as the lion lowers itself before it springs into the air, so must we humble ourselves that grace may lift us up to attain to the higher things of a Christian life.

III. St. Ignatius continued to the end of his life his penitential abstinence, and the practices of piety, humility, and charity which marked the first years of his conversion. God favoured him with the gift of tears, with spiritual enlightenment and discernment, with frequent raptures, and with great fortitude and constancy under difficulties and opposition. He himself laboured, and he taught the

members of his Society ever to labour, for the greater glory of God. Under the blessing of God, he founded various works, and gave himself to preaching, with most happy results. He sent his missionaries into many lands, in the two hemispheres, being eager to win souls for God, and to spread, with the Catholic faith, the fire of Divine charity. He also directed the foundation of colleges which long continued to be seats of learning. He especially instilled into the hearts of the members of his Society a spirit of perfect obedience, which he wished to be their distinguishing virtue. Spent with his many labours, he calmly prepared for the end, which came on the 31st day of July, 1556. He passed to his heavenly reward with the holy Name of Jesus on his lips. God blessed his Society, which made rapid development. It has given many Saints to the Church.

Devout Christian, recommend yourself to the holy intercession of St. Ignatius. Study as he did, to do all for God's glory, that your days and your works may be sanctified. Imitate him in placing yourself under Mary's patronage, and beseech your heavenly Protectress to obtain for you the grace prudently to avoid the dangers of the world, and to be faithful to the practices of a devout life.

August 1.

VENIAL SIN.

I. There are some persons who make light of venial sin, and others who view it erroneously in a contrary light. There is therefore a possibility of misapprehending its nature, and its consequences. But we should always remember, that whatever is a sin, is an evil; and that since every sin is detestable in itself, and offensive to God, the Sovereign Good, it should not be regarded lightly by us. Venial sin is a lesser offence, committed knowingly and deliberately, with more or less advertence and malice; but one which does not deprive us of habitual grace. It has its evil effects; but it leaves us still friends of God, and heirs of the kingdom of Heaven. Some venial sins may be described as rather sins of frailty, than sins of determined malice; while others, committed with forethought and full deliberation, manifest a distinct and deplorable malice on the part of those who commit them. There is, therefore, room for many distinctions in ascribing the degree of guilt—distinctions arising both from what is done, and from the intentions and dispositions of the person guilty of venial sin. We should be careful not to commit venial sins systematically, or without any effort to avoid them; and when we perceive that we are guilty of them, we should sincerely repent of our faultiness.

Devout Christian, it should be your constant endeavour to avoid your daily falls into venial sin. Never be callous or indifferent about them.

II. By committing venial sins, we become an obstacle to our own spiritual welfare, and we may even expose ourselves to the danger of falling into mortal sin. Venial sin cannot but be injurious to ourselves, as well as offensive to God, since it weighs upon our spiritual affections, and

renders us less prompt in using grace, and in rising in thought and affection to God. It does not, indeed, destroy charity, but it is an obstacle to the fervour and perfection of charity. Where there is a frequency in the commission of venial sins, and little or no effort to avoid them, there will be very little attraction towards spiritual things, and supernatural gain; and the will being rendered sluggish or indifferent, there will be less ready correspondence with the movements of grace. Resulting from this condition of the faculties of the soul, there may at last succeed so much faultiness, and such tepidity, that the way may be said to be paved for the commission even of mortal sin. Men do not usually begin by falling into grave sins—they at first have a horror of mortal sin; they fall into graver sins after they have begun to make little of the lesser sins. This ought to serve as a warning to us to prevent our being careless and indifferent about sin.

Devout Christian, be zealous in watching over your conduct, and in correcting what is faulty. Then will your faults be few, and you will always regret them. You will not have a clear and easy conscience, if you do not endeavour to guard yourself against committing what is only venial sin.

III. That venial sin is an evil to be earnestly avoided, is a conviction forced upon us, not only by what we have already considered concerning it, but also by what we know as to its punishment. God has at times brought upon men guilty of only venial sin sudden and great punishments. One instance is the case of Oza, who touched the Ark, and who was struck dead. Then faith teaches us that men who die in venial sin, have to endure the punishments of Purgatory until they have satisfied God's justice, because of such sin. To men who are sincerely desirous of serving God with a clean heart, it should be consoling to know, that their venial sins will be pardoned and atoned for by fervent contrition, especially if accompanied by some other meritorious act of religion, such as the hearing of Holy Mass, or the giving of an alms. It is especially useful, for this end, to recite with

becoming dispositions the acts of faith, hope, and charity. Human frailty will accompany us even to the end of our lives, and our venial sins may even be many; but we should particularly guard ourselves against attachment to these sins, and against indifference in combating them.

Devout Christian, renew your determination to avoid venial sin, and pray for grace to do this. Strive now and constantly to expiate your daily offences, that you may escape punishment for them hereafter. Pray to Mary Immaculate to obtain for you a sincere hatred of every kind of sin, and an ever-increasing zeal for your sanctification.

August 2.

HABITS OF VENIAL SIN—I.

I. HUMAN frailty is such that few men pass any day without committing lesser sins of one kind or another. There is danger of these lesser sins being disregarded; but they have their degree of malice, and their evil consequences, and it is our duty to try to avoid them. In what light should we regard them? We should say to ourselves: If God is so holy as not to be able to abide the least sin; if in obedience to His sovereign command we are bound to fulfil every detail of duty; if the sanctity of His law is such as to forbid even the least infraction; if venial sin together with mortal sin had to be atoned for by the sufferings and death of Christ; and if God in His justice must inflict temporal punishment of a severe kind for venial sins not remitted before death, then, all this being so, we cannot but conclude that venial sin is an evil to be avoided. We must not, therefore, make little of lesser sins, we should be careful not to form a habit of committing any kind of venial sin, we must be serious in trying to avoid these lesser sins, we should regret that we so often commit them, and we should repent sincerely of all our venial sins. The holy writer says: 'He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little' (Ecclus. xix. 1). To contemn any sins, even lesser sins, would be to disregard our duty to God, and even to contemn God's sanctity.

Devout Christian, beware of falling into any habit of offending God even by venial sins. To do so would be to contemn small things, and to expose yourself to fall by little and little. Beg of God so to inflame your heart with sincere love of Him that the least sin may be to you the object of your detestation and sorrow.

II. When Christians make no serious effort to avoid venial sins, they may contract a habit of committing them, and increase the number and persistency of their falls. A sure result of this will be a lessening of that fear which deters man from more grievous sin. Venial sins do not reveal their evil consequences so quickly or so perceptibly as do mortal sins, with the result that they do not so readily inspire us with alarm; yet they are a cause of offence to God and of injury to our soul. The absence of alarm lessens fear. If we continue to commit venial sins without fear, it will lead to a less keen apprehension of the evil of mortal sin. What may finally happen, if we fail to realize what our relations with God should be, and if we lessen the dread we should have of offending Him? Shall we not expose ourselves to disaster? Satan would lead men to say with regard to lesser sins: 'This is nothing, it is only a venial sin.' If 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' (Prov. i. 7), to lessen that fear would be the beginning of a fatal folly, and this lessening occurs when habits of venial sin are formed. Such habits lead men into a perilous path, the full danger of which they do not always perceive.

Devout Christian, be not undutiful to God, and ever fear to offend Him. Solomon says: 'The fear of the Lord hateth evil' (Prov. viii. 13). Ever cultivate this holy fear. If there are any venial sins into which you usually fall, be on your guard against them lest any habit of sin should be contracted. Pray for the grace ever to love and to seek purity of soul. David says: 'The Lord will give grace and glory. He will not deprive of good things them that walk in innocence' (Ps. lxxxiii. 12, 13).

III. Another evil consequence of the habit of venial sin is the increase of proclivity to sin. The whole effort of Christians should be to please God, and to avoid every kind of sin. This effort would be blessed by many happy results, among which would be the lessening of evil propensities. How different, alas! is the case when men fall into habits of venial sin! They make little of venial sin, and this gives encouragement and force to their evil inclinations. While

they continue to yield to these inclinations, although only in what they deem small matters, they are actually strengthening and encouraging them, instead of combating them. As a consequence, the more importunate and exacting will these inclinations become. Relapse into habitual faults without any serious effort at amendment will eventually lead to graver sin. Christians who are guilty of this persistent relapse will 'fall by little and little.' Since they so far disregard God, He will finally disregard them, and will permit them to experience the disastrous consequences of their remissness and infidelity. There would be hope of correction and of amendment if these Christians would only reflect seriously upon God's holiness, upon His sovereignty over all His creatures, upon the sanctity of His law, upon the teachings of the Sacred Passion of our Lord, and upon the punishment of sin.

Devout Christian, let such considerations weigh with you, and make you earnest in striving to avoid even the least sins. Pray to Mary, ever sinless, to look upon you with compassion, and to obtain for you grace to combat successfully all your failings. Frequent confession and Communion will strengthen you in the ways of grace.

August 3.

HABITS OF VENIAL SIN—II.

I. When Christians are so faulty as to continue the commission of venial sins without serious effort at amendment; when, therefore, they may be said to have contracted habits of venial sin; besides, by this conduct, lessening their fear of sin and increasing their proclivity to it, they also bring upon themselves other spiritual misfortunes. Their faulty persistency manifests attachment to their faulty ways, and it is especially this attachment which is offensive to God in their condition. It breeds a spirit of heedlessness, and leads to more frequent falls. Christians arrived at this miserable condition make no effort to reach a better standard of living, and by their many imperfections they may even give disedification to their neighbour, or at least they will not give all the edification that should be expected from them. This heedlessness, which is so detrimental to their souls, does not inspire them with alarm, because they say to themselves that after all they have not fallen into mortal sin. While Christians remain in this state of heedlessness, there will be no earnest effort in the spiritual life, there will be a listlessness in fulfilling spiritual duties, and spiritual advancement will be retarded. All this cannot be pleasing to God.

Devout Christian, be not heedless in what concerns the service of God, but strive to avoid all sin, and to fulfil His good pleasure with a faithful and willing heart, that you may be able to say with David: 'With my whole heart have I sought after Thee' (Ps. cxviii. 10). Although you may not expect to be free from all sin, yet let there be no persistency in any kind of venial sin; and be constant in your effort to avoid your usual faults. Often make acts of the love of God.

II. Another consequence of habits of venial sin is the sense of general unsatisfactoriness which Christians who have contracted those habits experience. This lessens that comforting feeling of peace which belongs to the state of grace. With this sense of unsatisfactoriness there will be a dilatoriness in action, an absence of profitable self-introspection, a want of purity of intention, and a lessening of meritoriousness generally. What a misfortune it is for a soul to be in a condition where there is so much to militate against spiritual joy and contentment, and against spiritual progress ! This sense of unsatisfactoriness will lead to a want of generosity in God's service, and to murmuring under the burden of duty and under the trials incidental to life. And where there are habits of venial sin, there will be a tendency not to appreciate others who are more virtuous and more fervent, and a preference to fraternize rather with such as are less devout and more lax in conduct. This sense of unsatisfactoriness will remain until serious effort is made to correct the habits of venial sin that cause it. There must be a return to more fervent prayer and to greater dutifulness.

Devout Christian, do not expect any satisfaction in a condition of faultiness. David says: 'Much peace have they that love Thy law; and to them there is no stumbling-block' (Ps. cxviii. 165). Seek ever your happiness in the Sovereign Good; then will you not fall a victim to any evil propensity, then will you not contract any habits of venial sin. Desire now to make amends for any remissness and undutifulness in the past by greater fidelity and fervour in the future.

III. It should not be surprising to Christians who persistently remain unfaithful in combating their faultiness if they experience an absence of spiritual relish and a loss of devotion. Such Christians at times complain when they do experience this consequence of their infidelity to grace, and they even make it a pretext for not being better than they are; but they are themselves the cause of it. From this loss of devotion there follow a certain dryness and unprofitable spirit of routine in prayer and in receiving the

Holy Sacraments, and a loss of interest in what tends to promote piety. The spiritual condition of such Christians deteriorates; there is in their case less interior recollection and less self-denial, if not also more self-indulgence. Moreover, when the soul is less attached to the Sovereign Good, it will more easily entertain inordinate affections, and it will more readily run after dissipation and passing vain satisfactions. From all this it will be seen that Christians who make no serious effort to combat habits of venial sin deprive themselves of many spiritual blessings, and open the way to many spiritual miseries. They still remain the friends of God, but they fail to give all the proofs and services of friendship which God demands of them. David says: ' Blessed are they that search His testimonies: that seek Him with their whole heart ' (Ps. cxviii. 2). These Christians will not escape from their miseries until they enter seriously into themselves, and strive earnestly and constantly to correct their faultiness.

Devout Christian, be persuaded of the wisdom of combating every kind of faultiness, and of not falling into any habit of sin. Beseech Mary, the ' Mirror of Justice,' to obtain for you a true and perfect heart in the service of God, that you may seek your holiest pleasure in doing His will even in every detail of life and conduct.

August 4.

ST. DOMINIC.

I. One of the brightest ornaments of the Church for priestly chastity and unflagging zeal is St. Dominic, the holy Founder of the Order of Preachers. He was born in an age when, side by side with lustrous examples of learning and piety, were seen in the sanctuary many men fallen into a condition of apathy, who failed to give sufficient instruction to the faithful. This neglect may have been the occasion of the spreading of the erroneous teaching of the Waldenses and Albigenses. These sects, often violent in their methods, and obstinate in disseminating most pernicious errors, devasted principally the southern provinces of France. God raised up many zealous apostles to combat their errors. Among these apostolic men was St. Dominic. From his infancy this Saint gave tokens of eminent virtue, and began practices of penance and piety. While attending, in his early years and during his studies, to the work of his sanctification by these practices, his heart went out to his neighbour in tokens of sincere charity. He gave in alms whatever money he had the disposal of, and even sold his books and writings to supply the needs of the poor. Assiduous in prayer, fervent in his religious practices, and in his devotion to the most Blessed Virgin, devoted to his duties and exemplary in his charity, St. Dominic won universal admiration. Thus were the steps laid for a life of usefulness in the Church.

Devout Christian, admire in this Saint the workings of grace in a soul ready to follow its inspirations. Happy will you be if, despising worldly vanities, you follow the movements of grace! It is written: 'He that feareth the Lord, will receive His discipline: and they that will seek Him early, shall find a blessing' (Ecclus. xxxii. 18).

II. St. Dominic was in due course raised to the holy priesthood, and, invited by the Bishop of Osma, he became at the age of twenty-eight years (A.D. 1198), a canon of St. Austin. Moved with zeal for the conversion of heretics and sinners, he gave himself to constant fervent prayer and preaching, and with happy results. To fit himself for his ministry, and to obtain God's blessing on his labours, he practised austerities. God destined him for a wider field of apostolic work: he was to carry the torch of his ardent zeal into the countries devastated by the Albigensian heretics. He with other missionaries spent ten years in Languedoc, during which, by argument and preaching, he achieved so great a success in converting the heretics that it was looked upon as miraculous. His manner of life was very austere. He went about barefooted, he fasted, and the time he gave to rest was short, and he slept upon boards. God attested to the sanctity of His servant by the miracles which accompanied his labours, and by his marvellous escapes from the snares prepared for him. St. Dominic took no part in the military movements against these violent heretics; but he foretold a brilliant victory gained by an inferior force of Catholics against a very large army of the heretics. He employed only the spiritual weapons of prayer, mortification, zeal, patience, and charity. During his campaign in Languedoc he instituted the Holy Rosary, the use of which form of devotion was fruitful in renewing faith and piety.

Devout Christian, see in the successful labours of St. Dominic God's answer to the Saint's prayers, and His merciful regard for the unhappy sinners whom the Saint, as His messenger, sought to convert. Have great confidence in the prayers of the Saints.

III. Under God's inspiration, and after due consideration and prayer, St. Dominic, in 1215, laid the foundations of his Order. He desired to see in the Church an Order of men, devoted to study, prayer, and mortification, who should instruct the faithful by zealous preaching. In due course the Saint obtained the Papal approval of his Order and of its Rules. Then various houses were founded, and

the Order spread rapidly. The Saint lived only six years after the founding of his Order. During those years his apostolic works and missionary excursions were blessed by God with marvellous fruit in Rome and elsewhere. He sought to imbue the members of his Order with a true apostolic and mortified spirit, giving them a bright example of humility, discretion, zeal, and abstinence. There are recorded three well-attested instances of his restoring life to deceased persons, and his other miracles were many. It is written: 'A good life hath its number of days: but a good name shall continue for ever' (Ecclus. xli. 16). St. Dominic closed his holy life with a most edifying death, but his name is enshrined in the glorious calendar of the Saints, and it lives in his spiritual children, who continue to edify the Church by their learning, zeal, and piety.

Devout Christian, praise God Who in every age has given to His Church saintly men and women, to adorn it with their virtues, and to further its heavenly mission in the world by their zealous labours. Recommend yourself with confidence to the prayers of St. Dominic. Ask Mary, the 'Queen of all Saints,' to obtain for you grace to imitate St. Dominic in his love of prayer, in his spirit of holy chastity, and in his zeal for God's honour.

August 5.

EFFECTS OF REPENTANCE.

I. All Christians need God's mercy, but especially when they have fallen from grace. When in mortal sin they are spiritually dead, and they have incurred everlasting punishment. Miserable is their condition and terrible is their lot. God's mercy may yet reach them, and saving grace may yet be bestowed upon them again; but that this necessary blessing may be actually realized they must repent sincerely of their sin, and they must fulfil the conditions of reconciliation with God. The effects of repentance are chiefly the restoration of grace and of the right to the heavenly inheritance. These happy effects bring the soul back to a condition of joy and peace, and they instil into it a new life and fresh energy in God's service. In many cases sinners, blind to their true welfare, reject the grace of repentance, or they delay to correspond with it. It is a grace they do not merit of themselves, and it is a priceless grace without which they will not be saved. Why, then, do they not heed it? Why do they not seek it with all eagerness? How can they rest without it, and until they obtain it? They are the victims of their own perversity. While they remain unrepentant, the guilt of their sin weighs upon them, and they are amenable to God's justice, which claims their everlasting punishment.

Devout Christian, pray for poor sinners that they may have the grace to turn from their evil ways. Return thanks for the many mercies you have received, and beg God not to withdraw from you the powerful succours of His grace, lest you should fall into grievous sin.

II. The grace of repentance must come from God, and sinners must correspond with it. We read that when our Lord cried out: 'Lazarus, come forth!' he that was dead

came forth. This is a figure of immediate correspondence with grace. When sinners co-operate with grace, repentance follows, and they enjoy all the blessings that accompany it. Their justification is accomplished; mercy comforts them. Grace having been restored, they are once more pleasing to God, and recipients of His favours; they receive back all their forfeited merits, and they are again capable of meriting heavenly and everlasting rewards; they regain the heavenly inheritance, and they may now approach the Eucharistic Table, and feast on the Body and Blood of their loving Saviour. Well did David say: 'Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered' (Ps. xxxi. 1). When our Lord commanded Lazarus to come forth, 'he that had been dead came forth, bound feet and hands with winding-bands' (St. John xi. 44). Mortal sin has its death-bands—vices, bad passions, wrong affections, sinful habits, proximate occasions of sin, and evil associations: all these must be cast off, or repentance will be insincere, and relapse into sin will surely follow. How great an evil it is not to be sincere with God!

Devout Christian, rejoice ever in God's favour, and employ every necessary means to persevere in His grace. Do not place yourself under the bondage of anything evil, and carefully avoid all dangerous occasions of sin. David says: 'Blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile' (Ps. xxxi. 2).

III. To the repentant sinner is said: 'Loose his feet.' He has gone in the paths of evil, and he has been drawn away from the good path—that is, from fulfilling the requirements of religion and of duty. 'Loose his hands.' He has been bound to some form of vice or unworthy conduct, or he has frequented bad company, or disregarded God's commandments. 'Unbind his face.' He has been blind to the teachings of religion, and to the example set by devout servants of God. His mouth has been closed to prayer and praise, and his ears have been closed to the Word of God. His mind has turned to what was injurious

and unprofitable. Upon his repentance the sinner must co-operate with those graces of God which enable him to free himself of all the bands that formerly kept his soul in touch with evil. Upon the loosing of those unholy bands, his conversion will be truly effected, and then will he be once more numbered among the living, among God's servants and friends, to sing God's praises, and to do His will, and then, too, ' there shall be joy before the Angels of God upon one sinner doing penance ' (St. Luke xv. 10). How happy, therefore, are the effects of repentance ! Let all sinners detest the ways of evil, and upon their repentance let them seek by a devout life to make amends for the past, that they may continue to enjoy the blessings which their repentance has brought them.

Devout Christian, admire the wonders of God's mercy and compassion displayed in His dealing with repentant sinners. Repent sincerely your having ever offended God. Commit yourself to Mary ever spotless and faithful, and beg her to obtain for you the grace to abhor all that is evil, and to make amends in this life for whatever sins you have at any time been guilty of.

August 6.

OUR LORD'S TRANSFIGURATION.

I. The admirable event of our Lord's transfiguration teaches many lessons, and strengthens our faith in Him, as the Son of God, appointed to teach all men, and to draw all men to Himself. It is useful to study St. Peter's testimony to the mystery, which he cites in confirmation of his teaching. His words are: 'We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ: but having been made eye-witness of His majesty. For He received from God the Father, honour and glory; this voice coming down to Him from the excellent glory, *This is My beloved Son in Whom I have pleased Myself, hear ye Him.* And this voice we heard brought from Heaven, when we were with Him in the holy mount' (2 St. Pet. i. 16-18). Our Lord selected as witnesses of His transfiguration the three disciples who were afterwards to witness His raising Jairus's daughter to life, and His own agony in the garden. There was some wise purpose in this. The disciples were Saints Peter, James, and John. The scene of the event was a high mountain, but the Gospels do not mention if it was the summit of this mountain. Our Lord's face shone as the sun—as St. Luke writes: 'The shape of His countenance was altered: and His raiment became white and glittering' (St. Luke ix. 29). St. Mark says: 'His garments became shining and exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller upon earth can make white' (St. Mark ix. 2). St. Luke says that our Lord went up into the mountain to pray, and that His transfiguration took place while He was engaged in prayer. All this glory belonged of right to Him, but He concealed it from men, presumably so as to obtain a near approach to them, and to give greater scope for their faith.

Devout Christian, adore your Divine Saviour resplendent

with beauty and glory in His transfiguration. Whatever appearance He may have, or with whatever veils He may conceal His majesty, whether on the Cross or in the Blessed Eucharist, He is ever the same Lord of all glory.

II. Let us now reflect on what St. Luke tells us of the event: 'And behold two men were talking with Him. And they were Moses and Elias, appearing in majesty. And they spoke of His decease that He should accomplish in Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with him, were heavy with sleep. And waking, they saw His glory, and the two men that stood with Him.' How mysterious was this event! Did our Lord summon Moses and Elias that they might join with His three chosen disciples as witnesses of His glory? And while they were in admiration at what they beheld, did He speak of His humiliations, sufferings, and death, so that when the time for these should come, the disciples might not be scandalized in His regard, and abandon Him? Did He wish His disciples to recognize His empire over the Church of the Old Law, represented by Moses and Elias, as well as over the Church of the New Law represented by themselves? Some wise design lay hid in the event. Following upon this vision of the law-giver and the prophet, we have the enthusiasm displayed by St. Peter, while out of himself with admiration and delight. As Moses and Elias were departing from our Lord, 'Peter saith to Jesus: Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. And as he spoke these things, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they were afraid, when they entered into the cloud' (St. Luke ix. 33, 34). We are not surprised at St. Peter's devotedness to our Lord, and his desire to live in the joy of that scene. It was not yet the time for rest and repose. Our Lord had first to fulfil His mission, and to pay the price of our redemption; and His disciples were to receive His commands and to be pillars of His Church. Their reward, which was assured to them, would follow after their labours (St. Luke xii. 32; xxii. 30).

Devout Christian, prepare your heart to be a tabernacle for your Lord. Do this by your fidelity in resisting sin, and

by your desire of spiritual things. Fervent love of Jesus Christ, manifested by this fidelity and by this desire, will bring Him into your heart.

III. St. Matthew narrates that as St. Peter 'was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshaded them. And lo a voice out of the cloud, saying: This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him. And the disciples hearing, fell upon their face, and were very much afraid. And Jesus came and touched them: and said to them: Arise, and fear not. And they lifting up their eyes, saw no one, but only Jesus' (St. Matt. xvii. 5-8). It might have appeared enough that the disciples saw our Lord's surpassing beauty and glory in His transfiguration; but to this evidence was added the Heavenly Father's testimony, so that nothing might be wanting to confirm their faith. How many consoling thoughts and inspirations are granted to all who desire to be true disciples of Christ, when retiring from all worldly distractions, they give themselves devoutly to mental prayer! Does not mental prayer made under these conditions tend to confirm faith, and to draw the soul to God? As our Lord and the three disciples 'came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: Tell the vision to no man, till the Son of man be risen from the dead.' How mysterious was this injunction! Why should not the disciples proclaim the glory of their Master? We note, too, how our Lord at that time foretold His resurrection. The disciples heard the announcement, but they did not understand the prophecy. How different is our conduct! Do we not wish everyone to know everything that may procure us honour or esteem? How much we have yet to learn from the lessons of our Saviour's life!

Devout Christian, rejoice in the testimony of the Heavenly Father: 'This is My beloved Son.' Renew your faith in our Lord's Divinity. Offer Him your worship and your service. Strive that others may come to a fuller knowledge of Him, that His reign may spread and be more fully acknowledged. The Father said: 'Hear ye Him.' Obey this command willingly and joyfully. Ask Mary, your heavenly Mother, to obtain for you grace to be ever a true disciple of her Divine Son, that you may receive a share of His special consolations.

August 7.

THE CHRISTIAN'S WARFARE.

I. THE Christian is set in the world in the midst of enemies, and his life is a continual warfare. Every Christian has his appointed post in the campaign, one being often more exposed than another; but all must strive to 'fight the good fight.' There is, first, the warfare of the faith, and then that of Christian virtue and duty. The world is full of errors in religious teaching, and often the blind lead the blind; but a true Christian must adhere constantly to the faith which has come down untarnished from the holy Apostles through the one ever-living, infallible Church. St. Paul says: 'As therefore you have received the Lord Jesus Christ, walk ye in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and confirmed in the faith, as also you have learned, abounding in Him in thanksgiving. Beware lest any man cheat you by philosophy and vain deceit; according to the traditions of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ' (Col. ii. 6-8). A Christian must therefore study to be well grounded in the faith of the Church, and he must carefully avoid the religious books and conversations of persons outside the unity of the true Church. He should not, as a rule, invite controversy, but he should be able to give an account of the faith that is in him. St. Paul says: 'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, do manfully' (1 Cor. xvi. 13).

Devout Christian, be steadfast in that holy faith for which your forefathers laid down their lives. Let not false prophets, or false Christs, or propagators of new doctrines, seduce you from the truth. Fight the good battle of the faith, and be not dismayed by the number of your foes, nor by their learning or social position. Always recite the Apostles' Creed with a firm and lively faith.

II. The Christian has also to battle for virtue and for duty. He is surrounded by snares and enemies of every kind, but he must not permit himself to be led to offend God. To him life is as a warfare of the soul against every form and force of evil. Seven powerful enemies are banded against him: these are pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth. They attack him secretly or in the open, boldly or cunningly, in the daytime or at night, according as occasion offers, with any promise of success. They would undermine and destroy Christian virtues one after another, and they would lead the Christian from the safe path of dutifulness and of piety. The warfare against these deadly foes must be continual. When St. Paul had warned the Ephesians against various kinds of vice, he said: 'Wherefore become not unwise, but understanding what is the will of God' (Eph. v. 17). How sad is the condition of Christians who are overcome by any form of vice! They do things that are unworthy of their high calling and of their heavenly destiny. With a true Christian the will of God is the ruling power, and grace aids him to lead a life pleasing to God. He therefore loves the ways of virtue and of duty, and he battles for these ways in a contest which is renewed day by day. He is unwilling to abandon the service of God to become the victim of any form of wickedness.

Devout Christian, be on your guard against your spiritual enemies. When your conscience tells you that any conduct is not right, listen to it, and avoid that conduct. Do not weary of fighting under the noble standard of Christian virtue and of duty: the contest is for God and for your salvation.

III. In the warfare of life the Christian will be circumspect and courageous. Knowing that he is beset by many snares, he will be on his guard against them; and he will not expose himself unnecessarily to danger. He will be guided by Christian prudence. If he takes alarm at the presence of evil, it will be only to shield himself from it, and to take steps to combat it. If the Christian in the warfare of life is circumspect, he is yet courageous;

for he calls upon God, and he knows that God is with him. David encourages the just man, promising him God's help, and saying: 'He will overshadow thee with His shoulders, and under His wings thou shalt trust' (Ps. xc. 4). A faint-hearted warrior is a source of weakness in an army; and a faint-hearted Christian is likely to be overcome. How noble is the example of the young, the weak, and the tender, who in moments of danger to their faith or virtue have shown themselves strong and invincible! When the powers of darkness rise against the Christian, seeking to overpower him, he must use the spiritual weapons of faith and prayer; as St. Paul says: 'In all things taking the shield of faith. . . . And take unto you the helmet of salvation; and the sword of the Spirit (which is the Word of God). By all prayer and supplication praying at all times in the spirit' (Eph. vi. 16-18).

Devout Christian, be animated ever with courage and confidence in the battle of life. If you fight well, the contest will be short and glorious. Remember what depends upon the result of the warfare: you are fighting for everlasting life. Put yourself under the protection of Mary who crushed the serpent's head. Be ever devout to her, that you may ever experience her help. Ask her to obtain for you constancy in the holy faith, in dutifulness, and in virtue.

August 8.

THE CHRISTIAN'S TRIUMPH.

I. In the warfare of life the Christian who acts circumspectly and courageously, availing himself of the helps provided for him, is bound to triumph. He will triumph over Satan, over the wicked in this world, and over his passions; and finally, his triumph will be glorious and everlasting. He will triumph by his firmness and constancy in faith and in virtue. St. John says: 'Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world: And this is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith' (1 St. John v. 4). How splendid was the constancy of the holy Martyrs who suffered for the faith! and how edifying has been the example of so many holy confessors and virgins who in every age have put the world to the blush by their religious faith and by their virtuous lives! The Christian regards his faith as a most precious treasure; he will not part with it: he will fight to protect it. But it is more than this: it is the rule of his life: by its holy teaching he forms his conduct; and it is his guide to everlasting life. How, then, does he triumph by faith? He triumphs by rising superior to all errors of doctrine, and by being free from all doubts and misgivings about religion. He triumphs because no power of darkness and no teacher of error can rob him of his faith; and his faith is as a bright light which shines constantly and triumphantly in the midst of darkness and of change.

Devout Christian, thank God for the gift of the true faith; let no influence or allurements cause you to swerve from it. It is the foundation of religion, and St. Paul says: 'Without faith it is impossible to please God' (Heb. xi. 6).

II. There are many, and even daily, triumphs in the

life of a Christian. He triumphs, even daily, over his spiritual enemies by his constancy in virtue. This is, indeed, to triumph gloriously. While the wicked are deprived of grace, and while many of them grovel in the ways of vice, being slaves of passion, the true Christian pursues the holy way of God's commandments, and he is comforted by God's help and favour. Even when the temptations that assail him afflict his soul, he puts his trust in God, by Whose grace he resists them and overcomes them. He remembers with comfort our Lord's words: 'In the world you shall have distress: but have confidence, I have overcome the world' (St. John xvi. 33). The faithful Christian is not held in any unholy slavery, and he will not submit himself to any influence likely to lead him to offend God. Aided by grace, he keeps his passions in subjection, and he avoids the wickedness to be met with in the world. If his heart is glad, there is no unseemly self-confidence; he mistrusts himself, but puts all his confidence in God. God rewards his confidence, and gives him victory over his enemies: 'They shall fight against thee, and shall not prevail: for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee' (Jer. i. 19). How happy should the true Christian ever be, for God's grace comforts him and reassures him! Let him, then, thank God in the words of David: 'I will extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast upheld me: and hast not made my enemies to rejoice over me' (Ps. xxix. 2).

Devout Christian, walk ever in the path that leads to triumph. Watch over your own weaknesses; do not expose yourself to danger; love the ways of duty and of virtue; nourish your soul with piety; frequent the Holy Sacraments: then may you rejoice over your spiritual enemies, and walk confidently in the path of the just.

III. The faithful Christian triumphs now in this world, and there is before him a triumph that will be everlasting in the world to come. His present triumphs after his many contests console him, and inspire him with courage; and the thought of the future reward lifts his soul to better things, and fills him with heavenly joy. How consoling

it is to him to recall our Lord's promises: 'To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of My God. . . . To him that overcometh I will give the hidden manna. . . . To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with Me in My throne' (Apoc. ii. 7, 17; iii. 21). In the future life, the Christian who triumphs, away from the scenes of strife and of sorrow, shall enter into the glorious kingdom of never-ending bliss and repose, to enjoy for evermore the vision and possession of God. Who will not desire this happy and glorious triumph? Who will not, so as to realize it, suffer a little now, deny themselves a little now, and strive earnestly now for a short while in the battle of life against the enemies of their salvation? To realize it, let there be no compromise with evil, no shirking of duty, no falling away from piety, and no murmuring against God's present dispensations.

Devout Christian, let nothing come between you and the heavenly reward. Your calling and destiny are to triumph both now and everlastingly. Your present sorrows are to be followed by joys that shall never end, and your present struggles by an everlasting and glorious victory. Pray to Mary, the 'Help of Christians' and the 'Gate of Heaven,' to obtain for you the grace of courage and of perseverance that you may secure the heavenly crown.

August 9.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DEFEAT.

I. Although the end of a Christian life should be triumph, the unfaithful Christian meets with defeat. Alas! that there should be a miserable defeat where there should be a glorious triumph! The unfaithful Christian brings defeat upon himself. There are unbelievers who close their eyes to the light, and of them St. Paul says: 'If our Gospel be also hid; it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God, should not shine unto them' (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4). To the unfaithful Christian the Gospel also shines, but for his perdition; it stands convicting him of despising the grace of God. Whereas, as St. Paul says, 'it is the power of God unto salvation' (Rom. i. 16), this Christian by his perverse life causes it to be to him as a decree of condemnation. To the good Christian the Gospel is the holy standard under which he triumphs; but the unfaithful Christian deserts this saving standard, and he suffers defeat. St. Paul says: 'But all do not obey the Gospel' (Rom. x. 16). Seeing the number of the perverse, we might exclaim with David: 'Save me, O Lord, for there is now no Saint: truths are decayed from among the children of men' (Ps. xi. 2).

Devout Christian, lament the fall of those who 'have made shipwreck concerning the faith' (1 Tim. i. 19), and of so many who have incurred defeat for whom Christ had prepared so glorious a triumph. Cling firmly to the holy faith, and walk ever in the saving ways of grace.

II. The unfaithful Christian suffers defeat in the struggle against sin: in some cases he offers no opposition, and in others he goes wilfully in the way of sin. In the sight

of God and of His Angels, he has been overcome, he may cry out with the wicked: 'The crown is fallen from our head: woe to us, because we have sinned' (Lam. v. 16). He has become like unto the prodigal feeding upon the husks of swine in a far-off country; the days of joy and of triumph have passed, and the time of misery and decay is upon him. Who shall do him honour? He may laugh and make merry, but grace has departed, and 'there is no peace to the wicked' (Isa. xlviii. 22). Through neglect, or through perversity, he has fallen a victim to some form of sin. How disgraceful to the unfaithful Christian to see himself overcome by such shameful and degrading vices as intemperance or impurity! How miserable to yield to violent anger, to dishonesty, or to sloth! How unworthy to neglect the duties of religion through worldliness or human respect! Yet through these and other evil ways the unfaithful Christian suffers defeat. Shall God say to him as to Jerusalem: 'Thou hast forsaken Me, saith the Lord, thou art gone backward: and I will stretch out My hand against thee, and I will destroy thee: I am weary of entreating thee'?

Devout Christian, there is no greater perversity than to forsake God. How lamentable is the defeat of a Christian when he is overcome by any vice! Pray that grace may ever support you and keep you from the ways of evil. 'Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners' (Ps. i. 1).

III. If the fallen Christian fails to rise, if he dies without sincere repentance, his defeat becomes an everlasting one. On the day when the just shall be crowned, he will be condemned; on the day when the faithful servants of God shall receive the reward of their victory, he will be consigned to everlasting punishment because of his defeat, because he has not fought the good fight. Then shall our Lord who died to save him, yield 'vengeance to them who know not God, and who obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction, from the face of the Lord and from the glory

of His power: when He shall come to be glorified in His Saints' (2 Thess. i. 8-10). The failure and the defeat will be irremediable; the unfaithful Christian will never attain to the heavenly kingdom. How it will, then, pain him to remember our Lord's words: 'I say to you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven: but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (St. Matt. viii. 11, 12)!

Devout Christian, reflect upon these Gospel words, and learn from them the folly of Christians who neglect the work of their salvation. Let not vanity or passion, or the inordinate love of passing pleasures or earthly gains, allure you into the way of failure and defeat. Let it sadden you to think for how many our Lord has suffered and died in vain. Beg of Mary, Queen of Heaven, to aid you by her powerful intercession to triumph over Satan, the world, and your own perverse inclinations, that you may be worthy to receive the everlasting crown. 'Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown' (Apoc. iii. 11).

August 10.

ST. LAWRENCE.

I. St. Lawrence desired to give his life for Christ, and he met his martyrdom eagerly and courageously. If he had not done so, he might have been lost. If God calls upon us to give our life for His sake, we must willingly make the sacrifice. Is not this what our Lord inculcated when He said: 'He that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal' (St. John xii. 25)? We must not love anyone, or anything, in this world, not even life itself, inordinately. St. Augustine says: 'If you have loved ill, then you have hated: if you have hated well, then have you loved.' Inordinate affection is like a fatal weapon with which we do ourselves harm. Let us love our soul as St. Lawrence loved his, and we shall save it. The tyrant offered him honours, favour, and pleasures; but under the circumstances to have accepted them would have been fatal to his salvation. He preferred to make the sacrifice of his life; he therefore despised his temporal life in order to secure everlasting life. What an admirable lesson! We must not make any compromise with the world, with princes, with our friends, or with our foes, when there is question of our duty to God and to our soul.

Devout Christian, imitate the glorious Martyrs in their fidelity to principle, in their love of God and of virtue, and in their devotedness to the Church. Be not faithless in these respects in order to secure any worldly advantage. Despise all earthly considerations when there is question of offending God, and of risking the loss of your soul.

II. Some Christians love inordinately the goods of fortune and of nature; for their sake they neglect the goods of grace. Which do we prize most, temporal gains

and pleasures, or our soul and its everlasting interests? Do we labour without repining for our worldly advantage, but do we give no time to our spiritual duties? Do we manifest great zeal in adding to our earthly store, but do we find tedious whatever relates to prayer and religion? Do we employ every care and precaution to prevent injury to our worldly property, but do we go heedlessly and even knowingly into the occasion of sin, or without effort at amendment relapse into serious faults? Does St. John Chrysostom address us when he says: 'You protect and preserve the pupil of your eye, but you neglect your soul?' How shall we answer all these questions? If we take means to preserve our temporal life, if we use remedies to restore our bodily health, we should not be less earnest in what concerns our soul—in avoiding mortal sin, in employing the means of obtaining grace, and in correcting and restraining our inclinations to evil. St. Lawrence put the eternal interests of his soul before the interests of his body and of his temporal life, and before all earthly gains and considerations. O glorious Martyr of Christ! you have won your heavenly and everlasting crown.

Devout Christian, strive with earnest endeavour for your highest interests. Let no snare, or worldly solicitude, or temporal advantage, lead you to the commission of mortal sin. St. Augustine expresses his astonishment that a man who of necessity must die, strives not to die; and yet a man whose destiny is to live for ever, does not strive not to sin. Let not this be your case.

III. Beyond the torments which St. Lawrence endured whilst being roasted on the gridiron, and beyond the life he was sacrificing for God's sake, the Saint beheld in spirit the bliss of Heaven and the reward of everlasting life. Let it be thus with Christians. When they suffer, or are despised on account of their religion, and when God demands that they shall lay down this temporal life, let them cheer their spirit by looking forward to the incomparable reward promised to their patience and resignation. The Martyrs counted the cost, and readily offered it, and they received in return the everlasting crown. O world-

lings, what kind of bargain are you making? Is there not an everlasting kingdom beyond the brief span of this present life? What are you doing to secure it? Is your whole thought devoted to passing gains, and is your only desire to preserve and lengthen out your present existence? St. Augustine says: 'So much is done to live a little while longer, but what is done to live for ever?'

Devout Christian, labour to secure for yourself the eternal years with God, your only true Good. To secure them do not begrudge the cost. If there must be self-denial and penance, dutifulness, circumspection, and the practice of religion, are not these things excellent both in themselves and in their fruits? Be wise, and be constant in well living. Beseech your heavenly Mother Mary to obtain for you the true spirit of Christ's followers. Let not the world be your master, nor its maxims your guide. 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His' (Rom. viii. 9).

August 11.

THE TWOFOLD COMMANDMENT OF CHARITY.

I. When a certain lawyer, seeking to ensnare our Lord in His teaching, asked Him: 'What must I do to possess eternal life?' our Lord required him to answer his own question. He demanded of the lawyer what was written in the Law. We learn from the answer the necessity of fulfilling the twofold command of loving God and our neighbour, and the degree of charity which the Law demands. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.' Our Lord confirmed the twofold precept, saying: 'This do, and thou shalt live' (St. Luke x. 28). We may ask ourselves if we love God sincerely, practically, and above all things. He has the very first and the strongest claim upon our love, by reason of His many relations with us, and of His infinite perfections. We belong entirely to Him, and we owe Him the full service of our love, because He has made us what we are, and given us all we have. By His loving providence we live. Moreover, He has given us our heart wherewith to love Him, and infused into it an attraction for what is good, great, and noble. He Himself is perfect in an infinite degree. God is infinite in greatness, goodness, love, beauty, wisdom, power, mercy, justice, and in every other perfection. We do not yet, however, see Him in Himself, but only in His magnificent works of benevolence in the spiritual order, and in the admirable display witnessed in the order of nature. All these works, which are the present objects of our faith or vision, reflect the Divine perfection of their Author.

Devout Christian, ever desire to love God above all things, because of what He is in Himself. The Angels in

Heaven ever exist in the bliss of the Divine attractions. Here on earth, away from the love of God, men cannot attain to complete satisfaction. Only when they love God with their whole heart, do they experience peace, strength, confidence, and contentment.

II. Wonderful as are the works of God which we may contemplate, we must yet remember that He Himself is infinitely above His works. Should we not therefore wish to love Him? There cannot be any worthier object to love. It is not, however, only by a privilege that we love God: there exists a solemn and supreme commandment, which requires us to love Him if we would be saved. Happy should we be to owe obedience to such a holy, and so sublime a commandment. Alas! that men permit earthly gains and pleasures, worldly advancement, and even sinful satisfactions, to turn away their affections and their service from God! Should it surprise us if thus they bring upon themselves God's anger and punishment? God couples with this command to love Himself, another which requires us for His sake to love our neighbour as ourselves. In the many ways in which we manifest our affection for ourselves, but not necessarily in the same degree, we are required to manifest our charity for our neighbour. In His last discourse before His Passion, our Lord again and again commanded His disciples to love one another. 'A new commandment,' He said, 'I give unto you: that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another. . . .' 'This is My commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. . . .' 'These things I command you that you love one another' (St. John xiii. 34, 35; xv. 12, 17). Do men recognize the full force and scope of this divinely imposed commandment? Are they willing to correct their 'likes and dislikes' in order to comply dutifully with its requirements?

Devout Christian, recognize that you are to give proof of your love of God, not only by loving Himself, but also by loving your neighbour. This is God's command, and

He says to you: 'If you love Me, keep My commandments.' Pray, then, for the gift of true charity.

III. We may inquire as to what are the principal duties which the love of our neighbour imposes upon us. Our charity must be universal. It must not be dominated by natural motives, in which case it would be uncertain and changeful, but by supernatural motives. Then will it be disinterested, pure, and constant. Inspired by supernatural motives, it must be extended to the poor, to the unfortunate, to the sick, to the unknown, and even to our enemies. Charity demands that we should correct the aversions we may be prone to entertain for certain neighbours, and repress the revengeful feelings that may arise against others. It forbids us to expose our neighbour's faults, to speak or judge unkindly of our neighbour, or to injure him in his property. Charity, moreover, requires us to help him in his spiritual and temporal necessities, and, as occasion may arise, to sympathize with him in times of sickness or misfortune. When charity is practised in these various ways, good feeling is promoted among neighbours, and many blessings will follow such obedience to this admirable commandment. Many men, alas! regard their neighbours as strangers with whom they wish to have no dealings, and not as children of the same Divine Father, and heirs of the same heavenly kingdom. Are we prepared to do for our neighbour what the Good Samaritan did for the stranger who fell among robbers, and who was despoiled, and maltreated? Yet our Lord gave his conduct as the example by which to guide ours in our dealings with our neighbour; for He said: 'Go, and do thou in like manner' (St. Luke x. 37).

Devout Christian, be not of the number of those who are willing to be kind to their neighbour only when it will cost them nothing. They do not imitate the Good Samaritan. Their charity is not modelled upon that of our Lord for us. Charity demands self-restraint, patience, and generosity. Ask Mary, so loving of all mankind, to obtain for you grace to comply dutifully with the obligations of Christian charity. Love your neighbour, if you would have God to love you.

August 12.

'THE GREATEST AND THE FIRST COMMANDMENT'—I.

I. A PHARISEE asked our Lord: 'Master, which is the great commandment of the Law?' Our Lord replied: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment' (St. Matt. xxii. 37, 38). This Divine command binds all men. We are placed under the sublime and most binding precept of loving God. We are commanded to do what it would be very wrong on our part not to do. And we note that we are not asked to perform arduous tasks, to practise severe austerities, to part with our possessions, to live in a wilderness, or to sacrifice our life; although even all this would be little enough to do for God, if He were to demand it of us. What, then, is required of us? We are commanded to love Him Who made us, Him to Whom we are indebted for all we are, and have, and hope for; to love Him Who is our Heavenly Father, infinitely worthy of our love. Should not the creature love His Creator? Should not the child love his Father? Should not man love God? It would be unjust and unreasonable not to do so. God is our First Beginning and Last End.

Devout Christian, God not only invites you to love Him, He even commands you to do so. Not to love Him would be to separate yourself from Him. To whom, then, would you go? The holy writer says: 'Love God all thy life, and call upon Him for thy salvation' (Ecclus. xiii. 18). God has written the message of His love in the great book of creation, and He delivers it with many lucid and impressive utterances through the word of the Christian Gospel. Let it draw your heart to Him with a true and constant love.

II. Who cannot love? 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.' There is no exemption from this universal law. At every time of life, and in every condition and employment, we can love. Tell the little child about his Heavenly Father; speak to this child of God's perfections, of His goodness, and of all He has done for man; and then ask the child if he loves God, and he will tell you that he does love Him. Tell this child about our ever-blessed Redeemer, about Bethlehem, and about Calvary; and then ask him if he loves our Lord. He will tell you he does love Him. And shall not we find it easy to love God, we who know all these things better than the child? To love is not only easy, it is also sweet. Sometimes we experience difficulty in controlling our affections for creatures; but when the object of our love is the Sovereign and Infinite Good, no bounds are prescribed, for we are commanded to love God with our whole heart, soul, and mind. O Christians, let Divine love captivate and inflame your hearts! God cannot be adequately worshipped and served by any other motive, or in any other manner, than by the generous and golden service of your love. He does not ask, nor will He accept, slavish or mechanical service. Man, using his free-will, and moved by Divine grace, is required to love God freely, willingly, joyously, and constantly.

Devout Christian, weigh well the kind and extent of your obligations under this precept of loving God, and desire never to hold back from God what He so justly demands. Desire that your love may ever be real, practical, living, and active.

III. Of all the men who know God's command that they should love Him, many, alas! seem not to realize its practical demands. We must show that we love, by unmistakable evidence of our love; therefore does our Lord say: 'If you love Me, keep My commandments' (St. John xiv. 15). Our love, too, must be loyal and constant. We give practical evidence of our love, if we keep the commandments, if we are faithful in the practice of our religion, if we strive ever to avoid sin, if we fulfil

the duties of our state of life, and if we do good to others for God's sake according to our opportunities. God's grace helping us, we will not permit ourselves to neglect His service, or to wilfully offend Him, under the temptations and seductions of temptations, of evil passions, or of worldly allurements. If we truly love God, we shall think of Him, and try to please Him, in our daily life, following St. Paul's injunction: 'Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God' (1 Cor. x. 31); and finally, we shall submit ourselves patiently to the Divine appointments when sorrow or trouble befall us. Do we not see that our duty of loving God demands all this of us? For it is written: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.' Let us not refuse God all that love which is His due. Earnest love of God is the secret spring of sanctity and of supernatural merit. Only let the stamp of this love be impressed on all we do, and our works and our life will be pleasing to God, and will merit His grace and His rewards.

Devout Christian, pray for an increase of Divine charity. Be not like those who wish to do as little as possible for God. Expand your heart, and desire to do everything for Him. Strive that you may be able truly to say with St. Peter: 'Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee' (St. John xxi. 15). Beseech Mary, your heavenly Mother, the brightest example of Divine charity, to obtain for you the grace to meet all the demands of the law which commands you to love God. Let all earthly considerations be disregarded that would lead you to offend Him.

August 13.

'THE GREATEST AND THE FIRST COMMANDMENT'—II.

I. THE commandment which requires us to love God merits to be reckoned the greatest and first of all the commandments in dignity, by reason of the dignity of Him Whom we are commanded to love. We are required to love God the infinite and eternal Being Who alone is of Himself, and Who is the Author of all things created; and Whose majesty, greatness, and glory we have been created to worship. By our love and service we join, as in a concert of worship, with the Angels, and with all the just, in doing Him homage. How excellent this love must be is seen by its effects revealed to us by our Lord's words: 'If anyone love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him' (St. John xiv. 23). Moreover, the motive of love in our service of God is higher and more worthy than other motives, such as fear, or the desire of gain. We may also say that the commandment to love God is the greatest and the first by reason of its far-reaching effect. If we love our neighbour, if we honour God's Name, if we keep the other commandments, it is because we love God. And even if it were possible to keep the other commandments without complying with that which requires us to love God, their observance would not save our souls. Therefore does St. Paul say: 'If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing' (1 Cor. xiii. 3). 'Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law' (Rom. xiii. 10).

Devout Christian, ever give God the first place in your heart, and let your duty to Him come before everything else. Then will your life be well ordered, and everything

else will have its proper place. How happy you should be in offering God that service which is more acceptable to Him than any other you of yourself can offer, and in uniting yourself with all the blessed in loving Him!

II. The commandment of loving God is the greatest and the first, by reason of God's claims on our love, since He is so worthy of it and so good to us. God is worthy of our love on account of His infinite perfections. Shall we not love His infinite goodness, wisdom, beauty, majesty, mercy, power, and love? He is the source of all good, of every good gift, and of all excellence. Man, rightly guided by reason, loves excellence; he should therefore love God. God claims our love as a return due to His goodness towards us. He has created us and redeemed us, He has made us heirs of His kingdom, and He invites us to eternal life in bliss with Himself. He has loved us as though we were the only object of His love. With Mary may we, then, say: 'He that is mighty hath done great things to me' (St. Luke i. 49). God's benefactions to us are in the order of nature, and in the order of grace; and in both orders they are profuse. God makes over to us the infinite merits of His Son, and He opens to us the channels of His grace and of His mercy. With David, then, we may exclaim: 'What shall I render to the Lord, for all the things that He hath rendered to me?' (Ps. cxv. 12). What God asks is our love. The holy writer says: 'With all thy strength love Him that made thee' (Ecclus. vii. 32). How ungrateful are those men who do not think of God, and who do not love Him! But blessed are those who recognize God's claims on their love. St. John says: 'We have known, and have believed the charity which God hath to us. God is charity: and he that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him' (1 St. John iv. 16).

Devout Christian, let your gratitude to God move you to love Him. But God is Himself above all His gifts. Love Him therefore for His own sake. This most excellent motive will lift up the character of your love, and give it constancy.

III. The commandment of loving God is the greatest

and the first in point of necessity. Though we have faith and hope, we shall not be saved without charity. Let the wicked, let men who seem to live only for this world, let all who disregard God's claims upon their love and service, fix their attention on this important consideration. If they die outside the charity of God, they will be deprived for all eternity of the vision and enjoyment of God, and their place will for ever be in the region of eternal night, misery, punishment, and despair. For the grace which comes by charity is absolutely necessary for our spiritual life in this world, and for our everlasting life with God in the world to come. 'He that loveth not, abideth in death' (1 St. John iii. 14). He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is charity' (iv. 8). Alas! how often men love what is not worthy of their love; how often, too, they love inordinately, and with offence to God, what they may lawfully love in due measure! For the sake of creatures, and of passing pleasures and gains, they lose God and eternal life. When at length St. Augustine turned to God, he exclaimed: 'Too late have I known Thee, O ancient Truth; too late have I loved Thee, O ancient Beauty.' Upon his conversion, he remained faithful to God's love. Would that all sinners imitated this bright example!

Devout Christian, pray that Divine charity may ever dwell in your soul, and fill you with assurance of salvation. The holy writer says: 'He that loveth God, shall obtain pardon for his sins by prayer, and shall refrain himself from them' (Ecclus. iii. 4). Join yourself to Mary, and to all the Angels and Saints and all the just, in loving God; and ask your heavenly Mother to obtain for you the grace to live and to die in the love of God.

August 14.

MARY'S DEATH.

I. THERE is something awe-inspiring and something sad and painful about death. It must so be, when we reflect that death is the penalty of sin. Even when death comes to the just, and no mist of misgiving hangs over the horizon of life, there is yet that same something of solemnity, sadness, and pain. There was one glorious exception to the rule; it was when Mary died. The decree of death must be submitted to in the bare necessity of dying, but without its usual details and accompaniments: such was the case when Mary died. St. John Damascene tells us that there existed in his time (A.D. 750) an ancient tradition, recording the miraculous calling to Jerusalem of all the Apostles. There they beheld a vision of Angels, and heard the singing of heavenly Spirits; and while they were enraptured with what they saw and heard, Mary yielded her most pure soul to God. No apostolic ministry was needed in her case to absolve from sin, or to perform the last anointing; but we can conceive that St. John administered the most Divine Eucharist to be Mary's viaticum. We can conceive also that Jesus comforted His holy Mother by the vision in some manner of Himself in the final moments of her earthly sojourn.

Devout Christian, let Mary's death be a subject to you of joy. See in it a fitting close to her spotless life, and the glorious passing of her soul to the enjoyment of its heavenly and eternal destiny. Praise God for His loving dispensations in Mary's regard at the supreme moment of her death.

II. We are too far removed from Mary's degree of grace adequately to conceive what were the dispositions of her soul as the time of her dissolution approached, and at the

very moment of dying. There was no sickness, disease, decay, or pain of body; and her soul, undisturbed by any untoward circumstance in the immediate surroundings, dwelt in the closest union with God, comforted by Divine communications, and established in the most perfect peace and joy. Many beautiful things have been said of Mary's death. Father Faber says that the penalty of her death seemed rather in the delay than in the act of separation itself; and he describes her death as a soft extinction, through the noiseless flooding of her heart with Divine love. She passed at length from among the living. The holy Apostles ceased to hear her sweet voice; she was parted from them. Only her beautiful frame remained in that chamber of death. Angelic Spirits received her spotless, glorious soul, and bore it to the heavenly mansions of her Son. No soul of creature except Mary's had ever been always so perfectly God's, or so completely possessed as to be entirely free from any power or influence that might turn it from its end. It was all this in death; it was all this as it sped to God.

Devout Christian, assist in spirit at Mary's death, admire her perfect dispositions, and thank God for the lessons her death teaches you. Pray that you may have the grace to be ever preserved from turning away from God, who is your First Beginning and Last End.

III. The ancient tradition mentioned by St. John Damascene goes on to record that the angelic chant at Mary's tomb continued for three days, and then ceased; and that then the Apostles, accompanied by St. Thomas, who had not arrived when Mary passed away, proceeded to open the tomb. Great was their astonishment when they found only the grave garments which had covered the holy body, and these garments emitted a sweet odour. Nowhere could they discover the holy body itself. They therefore concluded that Mary's Divine Son had given resurrection to that sacred body, anticipating in favour of his Immaculate Mother the time of the universal resurrection. It is certain that Mary's holy body is not among the almost countless relics preserved by the Church, and this can only be

accounted for by the fact that it is not on earth. If there was sorrow at Mary's death, it was caused only by her loss to earth. Mary had comforted and encouraged the Apostles in their heavenly mission, and her presence on earth had mitigated to some extent the sorrow experienced by them when our Lord ascended into Heaven. The fresh sorrow caused now by Mary's death is, however, attended by many consolations, such as their receiving her last words and blessing, their witnessing her departure, and the miraculous favours which followed it.

Devout Christian, recognize that the Church was deprived of a great comfort and treasure when God called Mary to Himself; but rejoice that she has become in the heavenly mansions the advocate of her countless children. Pray to her, in memory of the Divine favours lavished upon her at her most holy death, to obtain for you the grace to die a holy and happy death.

August 15.

MARY'S ASSUMPTION.

I. When Mary's soul passed from earth, it was received into Heaven by her Divine Son. The heavenly gates were thrown open, and Heaven's Queen entered the realms of bliss and glory. Heaven rejoices in the joyous event, and the Church on earth commemorates it every year with solemnity and rejoicing. O Mary, 'thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honour of our people' (Judith xv. 10). The greatest and most honoured of God's creatures had her abode for a time on earth, and now she is called by God to the everlasting kingdom. For Mary there had been a term of labour, of sorrow, of humiliation, and of suffering; and now these trials shall be no more. She enters the heavenly abode, where she shall enjoy for evermore repose, happiness, glory, and honour. Now may she in a rapture of gratitude exclaim to God: 'According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul' (Ps. xciii. 19). We contemplate Mary's assumption and rejoice in it; but what were Mary's own feelings as she was brought into the vision of God? Her soul was flooded with unspeakable admiration and delight, with gratitude and love; and Mary began her ceaseless worship of praise before the Eternal Throne.

Devout Christian, look up to Mary in her bliss, and pray that you may attain to your heavenly destiny. Let no earthly consideration so far divert your thoughts and your aims as to imperil your salvation.

II. We represent to ourselves the joy and admiration of the Angels upon Mary's assumption, while they exclaim: 'Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her Beloved?' (Cant. viii. 5). Mary

is to be their Queen, and she will everlastingly be to them a cause of joy and delight. The Angels behold in Mary what is described by the Royal Prophet: 'The Queen stood on Thy right hand in gilded clothing; surrounded with variety' (Ps. xliv. 10). Not only is no becoming heavenly adornment wanting to her, but her beauty and her glory and magnificence surpass everything that is seen in the brightest and highest of the heavenly spirits. The Angels see and admire, and they praise God for His gifts to Mary. Perhaps again they ask in the words of the Canticles: 'Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?' What transcendent joy fills Mary's soul when she beholds the choirs of blessed spirits in their beauty and glory, adorned with heavenly favours, gathered before the throne of God in such exceeding numbers; and she knows that all these and all the elect shall be her companions in bliss for all eternity!

Devout Christian, rejoice in your heavenly Mother's bliss. Praise God for His unspeakable goodness and love shown to Mary in the everlasting Paradise, and for preparing for all His Elect places in those realms of bliss. Look up to Heaven with holy desires.

III. Holy Church has not proclaimed as an article of Catholic faith that Mary's holy body rose again by Divine power and was assumed into Heaven; but this is and has been the belief of her children. We therefore represent to ourselves the bliss and glory of Mary, body and soul, in her assumption into Heaven. What joy and comfort in all her senses are now experienced! Her eyes behold her Divine Son, and her ears hear His voice; and by the light of glory she contemplates the ever-adorable Trinity. Untold delights ravish her whole being. Never again shall she be separated from her Son, and none of the exquisite pleasures which inundate her soul shall ever diminish or be lost. Now, too, she sees the power which God bestows upon her, and the especial and extraordinary favour and love with which He regards her. She sees what her office is towards the blessed spirits, and recognizes what she

must be to her children on earth and in Purgatory. The Angels shall ever honour her and praise her as the Mother of their Lord, and all generations of men shall call her blessed. O happy Queen, O loved and honoured Mother, how glorious is your assumption! how indescribable your everlasting bliss!

Devout Christian, never forget what Mary is to you. Ever honour your heavenly Mother. Pray to her as the Queen of Angels and the Help of Christians, to save you from your spiritual enemies, and from the power of all evil passions, that you may reach the heavenly reward, and be with her for all eternity.

August 16.

MARY'S TRIUMPH.

I. THE day of Mary's assumption is the day of her enthronement, of her reward, and of her triumph. Our Lord said: 'To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with Me in My throne' (Apoc. iii. 21); and to every faithful follower He shall yet say: 'Enter into the joy of Thy Lord.' How, we may ask, did He receive His own most beloved and spotless Mother on the day of her assumption? Adam, Abraham, and David have their thrones in Heaven, but by how much Mary's surpasses theirs! Adam fell under the power of the Serpent, whereas Mary crushed the Serpent's head. From the stock of Abraham came the Saviour, but Mary gave Him birth. David was a man according to God's own heart, but he fell into sin; whereas Mary was God's most beloved Daughter, the Mother of His Son, and ever sinless. Where, then, shall her throne be? How great shall be her glory? Has Jesus for His Immaculate Mother only the same throne that He reserves for His faithful followers? On the day of her assumption she is borne through the heavenly gates, and past the Angels, the Archangels, the Dominations, the Thrones, the Cherubim, and the Seraphim, and upwards again to the most glorious throne next to that of her Son. There, resplendent with glory, Mary is enthroned; there shall she reign everlastingly.

Devout Christian, give praise to Mary as the Queen of Heaven. In your sorrow and misery look up to her bright throne. From that throne shall ever flow down upon men needed blessings and heavenly comfort.

II. The day of Mary's assumption is the day of her reward. The clean of heart are to see God, the humble are to be exalted, they who mourn are to be comforted, the

poor in spirit are to possess the kingdom of Heaven. Mary was entitled to receive these and other rewards; but because she surpassed all others in virtue, in merit, and in the spotlessness and perfection of her life, as well as in the exaltedness of her dignity and of her grace, what reward shall be hers? Our Lord's followers owed everything to Him; but in a sense He also owed something to Mary, for through her He became man. And what love and care Mary lavished upon Him! In her case, therefore, there must be a fulness, a lustre, and a grandeur, in the reward bestowed, surpassing that given to any other creature whatever. The splendour of Mary's glory corresponds with her unspeakable dignity, as chosen Daughter of the Eternal Father, as Mother of the only Son of God, and as Spouse of the Holy Ghost; and now on the day of her assumption God crowns all His works in Mary for the glory of His own Name, and for the incomparable delight of all creation.

Devout Christian, rejoice in the exceeding measure of Mary's reward in Heaven. Remember that your own life will be recompensed according to its worthiness and perfection. Avoid, then, everything that is sinful and that is unbecoming. Nothing defiled shall enter Heaven. Pray that you may keep your heart pure.

III. Reflect finally that the day of Mary's assumption was the day of her triumph. It is a day which Holy Church holds in sweetest memory, as that on which Mary triumphed over death, sin, and Satan. Her enthronement and her reward are indisputable tokens of her triumph. We see, too, in Mary's assumption an illustration of the triumph of grace. To Mary was it said: 'Hail, full of grace'; and the children of the Church love to style her 'Mother of Divine Grace.' Mary was never without grace, and the measure of her grace was greater than that of every other creature. She never obstructed the workings of grace; she never resisted it, misused it, or left it idle; but she ever corresponded with it, and graces untold were showered upon her. In Mary, therefore, did grace shine, operate, and grow, producing fruit a hundredfold. Her soul was as the enclosed garden in which nothing hurtful ever entered, a

garden ever fresh and beautiful, ever perfumed with the flowers and aromatical spices of every virtue, and with the fruits of piety, of charity, and of every kind of good work. What crown shall grace have but the crown of everlasting glory ? Thus shall grace triumph. For Mary the day of her assumption was the crowning day of victory.

Devout Christian, desire for yourself the crown of heavenly glory. Desire to triumph with Christ and with His holy Mother. Beg through Mary's prayers the grace to be assiduous in doing good now, that you may sing of victory hereafter.

August 17.

THOUGHTS ON MARY'S ASSUMPTION.

I. When we reflect upon the glorious character of Mary's assumption, we recognize with admiration how God brought Mary's earthly career to a fitting close, and we feel our faith and trust in the wisdom and goodness of the Divine designs and dispensations strengthened. We may exclaim: 'Let Mount Sion rejoice, and the daughters of Juda be glad' (Ps. xlvii. 12). God is all-powerful over all His works. He designs, creates, and moulds them to His own ends as He wills. By His favour and special providence Mary had been conceived immaculate, had been preserved free from all sin, and gifted with altogether singular grace; by the same favour and loving providence she had been raised up, and in every way fittingly gifted and adorned that she might be worthy to be the Mother of the Divine Son. God crowns His work in her when He assumes her into Heaven, and bestows upon her, in exceeding weight and measure, beauty, bliss, and glory, and every other heavenly quality and adornment. The bounteousness of God's providence in the work of Mary's sanctification while on earth is now displayed in the richness and magnificence of the reward He bestows upon her in Heaven.

Devout Christian, God has His designs in your regard now, and He is preparing you for your future destiny. Strive by a good life to correspond with those designs; trust yourself to God's providence, which is always so wise and so good; and look forward with joy and hope to the future. God must yet crown the work of His grace in you. 'Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown' (Apoc. iii. 11).

II. Our Lord said to His Apostles: 'You shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned

into joy' (St. John xvi. 20). It was thus with Mary. Even a sword of sorrow had pierced her soul; but this passing sorrow, great as it had been, gave place to everlasting joy on the day of her assumption. No ripple now disturbs the serenity of the peace and blessedness enjoyed in the heavenly kingdom, where now her queenly throne is established for evermore. Her beautiful soul is flooded with a torrent of untold and indescribable delights; her eyes behold with more than seraphic rapture the face of her Beloved—her own Son Jesus; that most pure heart of hers, which was once so grievously wounded with sorrow, expands now with joy and love; and now the hymns of Angels and Saints ever enchant her with their sweetness and harmony, and she is enshrined by the most Holy Trinity in unsurpassed glory and magnificence. Mary realizes what we read: 'Death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away. And He that sat on the throne, said: Behold, I make all things new' (Apoc. xxi. 4, 5). Mary's glory should be a cause of joy to all Christians. The promises have been fulfilled in her case; they will be fulfilled in ours if we prove faithful to grace.

Devout Christian, console yourself in your trials with the hope of the heavenly glory they prepare you for. Remember with comfort St. Paul's words: 'That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory' (2 Cor. iv. 17).

III. Our Lord wishes us to share in His exceeding triumph, to which nothing is wanting, even as He gave to Mary to share in it. He has prepared a place in His kingdom for all His elect, and He wishes them to be with Him. Let this comfort all wayfaring Christians in the trials of this land of their exile. Our Lord has paid the price of their triumph, and His grace is sufficient to secure it for them. They must not neglect grace; and they must merit the heavenly reward, or it will not be theirs. Therefore must they keep the commandments of God and of His Church; they must fulfil the duties of religion; they must

avoid the ways of evil and the company of the wicked. Mary, too, wishes us to join in her triumph: for what mother would like to be separated for ever from her children? Christians should have confidence in Mary's love, for she will leave nothing on her part undone to save them. Let us be in earnest. Why is there so little effort to increase our grace? Why do so many content themselves with doing only what is barely enough to secure their salvation? Why are so many reckless about danger, and why do they so easily relapse into sin? Why is there so much spiritual sluggishness? Why do so many live as though they preferred the satisfactions of this world and of this present life to the heavenly and everlasting blessings which God has prepared for them hereafter?

Devout Christian, contemplate Mary in her assumption, and think of the unspeakable joys which became her portion when she passed from this life. Desire for yourself the share of the heavenly delights prepared for you. Ask Mary, your ever-loving Mother, to preserve you by her prayers and protection from the dangers of the world, and to obtain for you a spirit of earnestness in all that concerns your salvation.

August 18.

LOVE OF THE NEIGHBOUR—THOUGHTS.

I. The Christian law insists upon universal charity. Even as Christ died for all, giving thus an unmistakable proof of His love for all, so are His followers to extend their charity to all men. St. John says: 'If God hath so loved us: we also ought to love one another' (1 St. John iv. 11). This is clearly the law: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (St. Matt. xix. 19). St. Francis of Sales says: 'We ought to love our neighbour upon earth as we shall love him in Heaven.' In the first place, our thoughts about him must be regulated by the laws of charity. We must think kindly of him. St. Paul says: 'The God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of one mind one towards another, according to Jesus Christ' (Rom. xv. 5). There must be interior respect for our neighbour; and there will not be this if our thoughts about him are bitter and uncharitable. Even when he may have given us offence we must yet fulfil the law of charity, and we must not allow our judgment of him to be warped by ill-feeling and prejudice. Our thoughts about our neighbour should rest upon his good qualities, which recommend him to our esteem and to our affection, and not upon his weak points—for these we should try not to see.

Learn, devout Christian, to entertain kind thoughts about your neighbour, that thus you may foster charity and please God. You would wish him to think kindly of you; let a generous and reciprocal charity lead you to think kindly of him. Pray for grace to put away from your mind all uncharitable thoughts.

II. Christians sin against charity when they form rash and unjust judgments about their neighbour's conduct. Charity requires that we should refrain from forming an

unfavourable judgment. Our Lord says: 'Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned' (St. Luke vi. 37). St. Paul tells us that it is not lawful for us to usurp judgment. He says: 'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own lord he standeth or falleth' (Rom. xiv. 4); and St. James says: 'Who art thou that judgest thy neighbour?' (iv. 13). Men often discover that their judgments have been erroneous and unfounded. Unfavourable judgments create a prejudice against the neighbour which may lead to unjust and unkind treatment, and to various other offences against charity. They are often engendered by envy; therefore does St. Paul say: 'Let nothing be done through contention, neither by vain-glory: but in humility, let each esteem others better than themselves' (Phil. ii. 3). It is owing to perversity of spirit that men are prone to judge unkindly of their neighbour, and the same perverse spirit leads them to make known to others the uncharitable thoughts and judgments formed in their own mind. When some of the Scribes misjudged our Lord, He reproved them, saying: 'Why do you think evil in your hearts?' (St. Matt. ix. 4). Might He not address the same reproof to many Christians who form rash judgments of their neighbour?

Devout Christian, prefer not to judge your neighbour in any way, rather than to judge him unkindly; and even when he is certainly at fault, refrain from all uncharitableness in your judgment. Let it be just but not unkind. Pray for a true spirit of charity.

III. Christian charity demands that we should wish well to our neighbour. Our wishes for his spiritual and temporal welfare should be sincere, and should proceed, not from self-interested motives, but from a true spirit of charity. To wish anyone evil is the sign of an envious and malignant spirit; it is like the spirit of the devil, whose object is always to do harm. To wish to help and comfort our neighbour, even when we are unable to do so, is a sign of true charity, and it will have its reward. Christians should be pleased to see the success, welfare, and happiness of their neighbour, and they should, as occasion may offer,

wish to contribute to his comfort and advantage. St. Paul says: 'Rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep. Being of one mind one towards another' (Rom. xii. 15, 16). Christians of a benevolent disposition will avoid breaches of charity, and they will perform the duties of charity with a good grace and in a way to cement union and to give pleasure. Their good wishes for their neighbour's welfare and their desire to contribute to it will take a practical form by their rendering kind offices when occasion occurs.

Strive, devout Christian, to cultivate this interior charity, and ever repress the ill-feeling and envy that would destroy charity. Endeavour to overcome selfishness, and extend your good wishes to your neighbour. Pray to Mary, whose life was a lesson of charity, to obtain for you a true spirit of charity, that you may not offend against this essential Christian virtue by any unkind thought, judgment, or wish.

August 19.

LOVE OF THE NEIGHBOUR—AFFECTIONS.

I. Christian charity requires that our feelings for our neighbour should be those of benevolence and love, motived by the love of God, and by a sincere desire to comply with the Divine commandment of loving our neighbour as ourselves. St. Peter says: 'Before all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves' (1 St. Pet. iv. 8). This Christian sentiment must spring from the heart; but whatever of nature there may be in it must be corrected by the motives just mentioned, for charity is a supernatural virtue which causes us to love our neighbour as ourselves for God's sake. St. John says: 'Let us love one another: for charity is of God' (1 St. John iv. 7); and the Apostle goes on to say: 'This commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God love also his brother.' Christians must therefore love one another with a supernatural affection. When love would appear to be only a natural sentiment, it must be purified and elevated by some supernatural motive, and it must be kept in accordance with the Divine law, otherwise it may easily prove an obstacle to spiritual good, and even a spiritual danger.

Devout Christian, love every neighbour; but let the love of God regulate and control your love. Let your love be genuine and pure, and let it be for God's sake. Beg of God that no love of yours may ever or in any way be displeasing to Him; pray that you may ever love Him above all, and love others only for His sake.

II. As the whole conduct of Christians should ever be regulated by religion, virtue, and discretion, that they may be preserved from what is evil or foolish and guided wisely in the way of a good life, so should it be in all that concerns their relations with their neighbour. Then will

their love of their neighbour be an antidote to hatred and ill-will, and a preservative against those ill-regulated affections which are in various ways detrimental both to those who entertain them and to those for whom they are entertained. True charity will make Christians sincerely desirous of their neighbour's spiritual and temporal good; but experience shows that ill-regulated affections are often the cause of spiritual harm, and it is therefore clearly seen that they do not spring from Christian charity but from passion. Hatred and ill-will corrupt the heart, and create a canker of bitterness that destroys the sweetness of charity. St. Paul says: 'Let love be without dissimulation. Hating that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good. Loving one another with the charity of brotherhood, with honour preventing one another' (Rom. xii. 9, 10). Love will not be perfect where mutual respect is wanting, or where there is a contentious spirit; nor will it be constant when there is no spirit of forbearance and forgiveness, or where it depends merely upon natural 'likes and dislikes.'

Devout Christian, pray that the noble and meritorious sentiment of true charity may guide you in your relations with your neighbour. Beware both of natural antipathies and of natural attractions, lest they undermine the virtue of charity and lead to any offence against God. Model your charity upon the charity of Christ and of His Saints, and upon their inspired teaching.

III. All kinds of affection are not wise; there is one kind that needs curbing and correcting. This is a natural affection of a tender or soft character which would lead us to say and do things that our better judgment would condemn. It often leads to a constant thinking of the persons for whom this too natural affection is entertained, and to an immoderate desire of being in their company. This affection, if not moderated and supernaturalized, is a weakness that may become an absolute danger, and thus will it prove an affection which both religion and right reason will condemn. In the innocent it will at first be innocent, but later some danger may be perceived. Even while it

remains innocent, it may be seen that it is only of nature, and possibly foolish and unprofitable rather than Christian, reasonable, and beneficial. This kind of affection may finally come to be associated with lascivious thoughts and other perils. It is not prompted by any supernatural motive, and it is not regulated by the laws of Christian charity. Christians should therefore guard themselves against such an affection, and act discreetly, lest they should fall unduly under its influence.

Devout Christian, strive ever to purify your affections and to bring them under the operation of grace. Let not the love of any creature lead you to offend in any way God who loved you so much as even to die for you. Let His place in your heart be supreme and sovereign. Beseech Mary, who loves you too, to obtain for you the grace ever to regulate your affections according to the desires and commands of the Sacred Heart.

August 20.

LOVE OF THE NEIGHBOUR—WORDS.

I. THE charity which we must bear our neighbour by the Divine command will not be only a sentiment of the heart, it will manifest itself exteriorly in our words and conduct. We must speak of our neighbour with charity, and address ourselves to him with respect and charity. If we speak to him in a gentle tone and in a kindly and open manner, we shall conciliate his good will and win his confidence; but if we address him harshly and disrespectfully it will pain him and turn him against us. There are times when charity would require us not to speak at all; as, for instance, when our words would only irritate our neighbour and do no good. When speaking we should adopt a tone of voice and a manner and form of expression that will betoken our kind feeling and good intentions, and we should allow others time to speak, and we should receive their remarks with respect and attention. Even when the remarks are censorious or unkind we should abstain from making a heated answer. Solomon says: 'A mild answer breaketh wrath: but a harsh word stirreth up fury' (Prov. xv. 1). Many words are uttered without due consideration, and become the cause of unpleasantness and of disunion.

Devout Christian, let your words be so considered and guarded as not to cause feelings opposed to Christian charity. Let your speech be such in matter and in manner as to promote confidence and good feeling. St. James says: 'If any man offend not in word; the same is a perfect man' (iii. 2).

II. Christians should make a rule not to speak of their neighbour's faults. There may be occasions when it would be proper to speak of them in the interest of their neigh-

bour, and to do good; but even then it should be done with discretion and with charity. What merits condemnation is the habit of speaking of the neighbour's faults without good reason and without discrimination, especially if this is done with any unkind or envious feeling. It is particularly wrong when there is an intention thereby to injure the neighbour, or even a knowledge that injury is likely to be consequent upon our making remarks about his failings. We should speak rather of his good qualities and of his good works than of his faults. We should be careful, when not necessary, not to say what would wound our neighbour's feelings, or what would dishearten or discomfort him. Finally, when duty requires that reproof should be administered, let it be done in the way directed by St. Paul, where he says: 'If a man be overtaken in any fault, you who are spiritual instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted' (Gal. vi. 1).

Devout Christian, speak ever of your neighbour as you would like him to speak of you. You will one day be judged concerning your words about him; so speak of him that you may not fear this judgment. The holy writer says: 'Let the word of peace and justice keep with thee' (Ecclus. v. 12). . . . 'A sweet word multiplieth friends, and appeaseth enemies, and a gracious tongue in a good man aboundeth' (vi. 5).

III. Kind and charitable speech is a sign of a virtuous heart. Our Lord said: 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh' (St. Matt. xii. 34). If, then, we are guilty of uttering words full of malice about our neighbour, we condemn ourselves as having a perverse heart. Thus, too, will it be if we are guilty of detraction, if we carry tales in order to sow dissension, and even if we use false flattery with malicious purpose. In all these ways may we do harm to our neighbour, and thus infringe that law of love enjoined us by our Lord, Who said: 'These things I command you, that you love one another' (St. John xv. 17). Christians may by judicious speech encourage virtue, instil religion, promote good feeling, give comfort,

and bring enmities to an end. Happy are those whose conversation and good offices tend to these laudable ends! The holy writer says: 'A man wise in words shall make himself beloved' (Ecclus. xx. 13). Opportunities of saying a kind and profitable word occur every day. Wise and charitable are those who avail themselves of these opportunities!

Devout Christian, school yourself to use your words with consideration for your neighbour's feelings. Pray for grace not to offend against charity by your words. Seek your happiness in doing good to your neighbour by agreeable conversation, by suitable advice, by kind and encouraging words, and by assurances of good feeling. Pray to Mary to obtain for you a true and constant spirit of fraternal charity, that you may be recognized as a disciple of her Divine Son.

August 21.

LOVE OF THE NEIGHBOUR—CONDUCT.

I. THE charity which God commands us to entertain for our neighbour must necessarily appear in our bearing towards him. It will lead us carefully to avoid any conduct that is likely to cause him loss, injury, pain, or unhappiness. We will not be haughty, or uncivil, or regardless of his feelings. We will not make him uncomfortable in our society by any manifestation of dislike or of disregard. If we owe him money, we will not delay to satisfy the debt, lest he should suffer in any way from our neglect. If we are the cause of any annoyance or inconvenience to him we will seek at once to remedy this. In all such ways would we wish our neighbour to act towards us; charity, therefore, demands that we should thus deal with him. St. Paul says that we should be 'mutually careful one for another' (1 Cor. xii. 25). We should therefore abstain from being hurtful or troublesome in our conduct towards our neighbour, for such conduct would tend to undermine charity.

Learn, then, devout Christian, to study your neighbour in your dealings with him, that charity may not be wounded. Admire the lessons of this excellent virtue which are found in the sacred writings. Let not these lessons be preached in vain as far as you are concerned. Labour to correct any spirit of selfishness, inconsiderateness, or unkindness that might cause you to give unnecessary pain to your neighbour, or that might lead him to deem you wanting in true charity.

II. Charity not only requires that we should abstain from any conduct that might give pain to our neighbour, but it further demands that we should seek to give him pleasure, and that we should consult his advantage.

St. Paul says: 'Bear ye one another's burdens: and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ . . . . Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith' (Gal. vi. 2, 10). 'Let every one of you please his neighbour unto good, to edification' (Rom. xv. 2). And St. John says: 'He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall put up his bowels from him: how doth the charity of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth' (1 St. John iii. 17, 18). Our conduct, then, should be such that it may be seen that our charity is not sterile. We must not be indifferent to our neighbour's welfare; but we should be prepared, according to circumstances, to serve him ever at some trouble and cost to ourselves. Our Lord says: 'Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not away' (St. Matt. v. 42).

Devout Christian, if you would be a true disciple of Christ, do not deny our Lord that thoughtful consideration which He demands of you for your neighbour. Be not of the number of those who are charitable only when it costs them nothing. Meet the demands of charity willingly and cheerfully, according to your opportunities and according to your circumstances; thus will your charity be pleasing to the Sacred Heart.

III. Christians should be sympathetic in their conduct towards their neighbour. When they are unable to render practical aid to their neighbour in his needs they may at least offer him the comfort of their sympathy. Christians should make their neighbour feel that they are friendly, and kindly disposed towards him, and they should by their conduct strive to inspire him with confidence in their goodwill towards him. They will therefore show pleasure when things go well with their neighbour, and they will sympathize with him when things are adverse, as in sickness and in misfortune. This is what St. Paul inculcates where, using the figure of a body, he says: 'If one member suffer any thing, all the members suffer with it: or, if one member

glory, all the members rejoice with it' (1 Cor. xii. 26). He also says: 'Rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep' (Rom. xii. 15). In these ways does true charity manifest itself.

See then, devout Christian, the beautiful ways of charity, and seek ever to walk in them. Study these ways, that you may come to admire them more and more. Beseech the Divine Spirit to infuse into your heart a relish for this delightful virtue of charity. Put away from you coldness and indifference towards your neighbour, as they are altogether opposed to Christian charity. Turn to Mary, and learn from her tender heart how to love all men for Christ's sake. Beseech her to obtain for you the precious gift of charity. All men are her children: wish, then, to love them in a practical way for her sake.

August 22.

'OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN.'

I. THE father of a family provides for his children, and they look to him to supply their wants: he loves his children, and they in turn love and respect him; lastly, he rules over his family, and dutiful children obey him. This order of things is based upon that which exists between God and His creatures, for God is the Heavenly Father of men, 'of Whom,' as St. Paul says, 'all paternity in Heaven and earth is named' (Eph. iii. 15). Through the mystery of the Incarnation, we have been adopted as sons of God (Eph. i. 5). This is not a mere figure of speech; for, as St. Paul says, 'The Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God' (Rom. viii. 16). It was taught by our Lord on more than one occasion, but especially when He instructed His disciples to pray. We should be for ever grateful for His directing us to address God as 'Our Father Who art in Heaven.' While not losing our deep sense of respect for God when we pray, we are inspired with confidence when we know that He is our Father, and we are comforted in this land of exile, and in circumstances of toil and sorrow, to be reminded that we have a Father in Heaven Who loves us and Who watches over us, and that this Heavenly Father is God Himself. When we address God as 'Our Father Who art in Heaven' we are also reminded of the consoling truth that Heaven is our home, the abode of our Father, and the inheritance prepared for us.

Devout Christian, when beginning the Lord's Prayer, raise your thoughts to God with filial love and confidence, and let these sentiments pervade your prayer throughout.

II. In the Lord's Prayer we throw ourselves on the providence of God, we seek the spiritual and temporal

blessings we need. With what confidence we should do this, when we reflect that God is our loving Father! A father provides for his children willingly, devotedly, abundantly; he will even suffer want himself that they may not do so. What, then, may we not expect from our Heavenly Father? St. Paul says that He is 'rich unto all that call upon Him' (Rom. x. 12). As to our temporal wants, our Lord tells us not to be solicitous about them, for, He says, 'your Father knoweth that you have need of these things' (St. Matt. vi. 32). 'If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more will your Father Who is in Heaven, give good things to them that ask Him?' (vii. 11). Let us, then, be assured that our petitions will be heard, and that God's tender and thoughtful providence will ever watch over our spiritual and temporal welfare. We are further comforted in addressing ourselves to God in the Lord's Prayer, when we reflect that our Heavenly Father loves us. His immeasurable love is directed by His infinite wisdom and by His infinite goodness. O sweet title of Father, what do you not tell us of God's love! How you invite us to trust Him, and move us to love Him!

Devout Christian, let these reflections comfort you when you begin the Lord's Prayer, and remind you of what God is to you, and of His watchful and loving care of you. Oh, pray with feelings of dutiful piety, that your prayer may be acceptable to your Heavenly Father!

III. Submission to God's will is a most necessary and obligatory act of religion. We are not independent of God, nor are we to dare seek to direct the ways of His providence. A father must rule over his family, and this is for the good order of the house and for the benefit of the family. God must ever rule, for He is 'Lord over all' (Rom. x. 12). David said: 'Thou hast dominion over all, in Thy hand is power and might: in Thy hand greatness and the empire of all things' (1 Par. xxix. 12). This is necessarily as it should be; so when we address ourselves to God as 'Our Father Who art in Heaven' we acknowledge God's fatherly rule over us, and we dutifully submit

ourselves to His disposal. We should place ourselves in His hands even as David did, and all will be well. David said: 'The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want nothing' (Ps. xxii. 1). As God's children we must wish to be controlled by Him, and let us be comforted by the thought that His is a fatherly control. Our sentiments, therefore, in reciting the Lord's Prayer should be those of unshaken confidence, dutiful love, and perfect submission.

Devout Christian, renew your faith in God as your Heavenly Father. He is not forgetful of you; be not forgetful of Him. Often recite the Lord's Prayer, and lift up your thoughts to Heaven when you do so, even as David when he said: 'I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me. My help is from the Lord, Who made Heaven and earth' (Ps. cxx. 1, 2). Beg through Mary's prayers the grace of filial dutifulness towards God when you pray to Him, and of fervour in reciting the 'Our Father.'

August 23.

'HALLOWED BE THY NAME.'

I. It is the duty of all God's intelligent creatures to praise Him. It has been remarked that there is, as it were instinctively, in man, an impulse to worship a Supreme Being. Alas! that, through sin and its consequences, the minds of many men have been darkened to lead them to worship what is not God! In the Lord's Prayer we address God as His children. To us, then, it is granted both to know Him and to love Him. Religion requires that we should praise Him. When we pray, saying: 'Hallowed be Thy Name,' we both render worship ourselves and we express our desire that God may be known and worshipped by all His creatures. How pleasing to our Heavenly Father are the sentiments expressed by these words devoutly recited! The psalms of David give utterance to similar sentiments. We read: 'Shout with joy to God, all the earth, sing ye a psalm to His Name; give glory to His praise' (Ps. lxv. 1, 2). St. John heard God's praises in Heaven: 'Holy, Holy, Holy' (Apoc. iv. 8); and we on earth owe the same homage. Our Lord teaches us to express it in the words: 'Hallowed be Thy Name.' We read how Tobias, Job, David, and Daniel prayed, blessing God's Name, which shows that if we would be regarded as God's servants we must not fail in our duty of praise; and we note how our Lord teaches us to begin our prayer with words of praise.

Devout Christian, say the Lord's Prayer with sentiments of worship and praise; then will your prayer be acceptable. David prayed, saying: 'I will praise the Name of God with a canticle: and I will magnify Him with praise. And it shall please God better than a young calf' (Ps. lxviii. 31, 32) offered in sacrifice.

II. When we say 'Hallowed be Thy Name' we signify our desire to praise God, and we beg for grace to enable us to do so in an acceptable manner. We seem to say: 'Thou, O God, art worthy of everlasting praise, and we pray that we may ever render Thee due worship.' We acknowledge God's infinite greatness, sovereignty, goodness, and mercy, and the homage we owe Him. The prayer is an expression of this homage, and of our sentiments of worship, reverence, admiration, gratitude, and love. It testifies at once to our faith and to our devotion. We are inspired with sentiments like to those of David when he said: 'I will praise Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart. . . . I will worship towards Thy holy temple, and I will give glory to Thy Name' (Ps. cxxxvii. 1, 2). We render our praise in union with all creatures, but with special filial devotedness, for we are children praising our Heavenly Father. We should, aided by Divine grace, make all the more effort to render this praise with earnest filial piety, since the heart of man, owing to the Fall, is more prone to love creatures than to love God, and our dutifulness should move us to correct this unhappy propensity. Without constant and renewed thought and effort in the right direction we shall not correct this propensity; but our daily recitation of the 'Our Father' invites us to renew as often our sentiments of filial love and devotedness towards God. Let us not merit God's reproach to the Jews: 'If then I be a father, where is My honour?' (Mal. i. 6).

Devout Christian, be resolved always to utter with fervent sentiments of filial piety these words of the Lord's Prayer: 'Hallowed be Thy Name,' that your prayer may ascend as sweet incense to the throne of God, and be pleasing to the heart of your loving Heavenly Father. It is written: 'Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory, and honour, and power' (Apoc. iv. 11).

III. When we say 'Hallowed be Thy Name' the value of our prayer is enhanced if we desire not only that God may be honoured by our own praise but also that all men may join with us in praising and loving Him. The Saints called upon all creatures to bless God, because of His ex-

ceeding greatness and goodness. David's psalms are full of invitations to praise God; thus we read: 'Praise ye the Lord because psalm is good: to our God be joyful and comely praise. . . . Praise ye Him, all His Angels: praise ye Him, all His hosts. . . . Kings of the earth and all people: princes and all judges of the earth.' 'O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise Him, all ye people.' Holy Church directs her ministers to render frequent praise to God every day, and she appoints her public worship to gather her children together in rendering prayer and praise. The meaning of our prayer should be: May all men know Thee and render to Thee the homage of their love and praise! Thus shall we testify to the sincerity and breadth of our charity both towards God and towards men, for we shall wish that God may receive universal homage, and that all men may happily be His servants, and be in the way of salvation. Our prayer will not be acceptable if it does not also mean that both we ourselves and all others may give praise to God, not by our words only but by the dutiful character of our lives. Let it not be said of us that we honour God with our lips, but that our hearts are far from Him.

Devout Christian, let your prayer embrace the holy desires we have been considering. Beseech Mary to obtain for you a wider and deeper piety, that you may always love prayer and give it its fullest meaning.

August 24.

'THY KINGDOM COME.'

I. We come now to acknowledge God's sovereignty. When we say, 'Thy kingdom come,' we may give to these words various pious meanings. We may mean: May all men submit dutifully to Thy sway, and may Thy dominion extend over the willing hearts of all! May the spiritual kingdom of Thy Church be extended throughout the whole world, and may all men enjoy the blessings which it is her mission to impart! May the kingdom of Thy grace embrace the souls of all men, and may all be sanctified and sustained by Thy grace! May Satan, and the world, and all the spiritual enemies of man, be overcome, and may all men hail Thy rule and submit themselves to Thee as their Sovereign Lord! May the time come when we shall enter into Thy everlasting kingdom, and when Thou shalt rule over us for ever in the kingdom of Thy glory! David said: 'Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all ages, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations' (Ps. cxliv. 13). We must admit God's sway over us now; we must submissively and fully fulfil His commands now, and embrace dutifully now the dispensations of His providence, if we would enter into His everlasting kingdom hereafter. We pray to do these things when we say: 'Thy kingdom come.'

Devout Christian, pray for grace to fulfil the conditions for living in the state of grace now, and for being with God in His kingdom hereafter. Let the reign of sin be at an end, and put no obstacle to the reign of Christ in your soul.

II. When we say, 'Thy kingdom come,' our prayer has, first of all, its meaning with reference to God, and then with reference to ourselves. With reference to God we in our prayer do homage to His paramount and universal

sovereignty. May this be universally and dutifully acknowledged! May there be universal and complete submission to God's commands! With reference to ourselves we pray that God may reign in our hearts, and that we may enjoy the blessings of His rule over us. This implies a petition that no other power may obtain dominion over us, and that we may have grace to submit ourselves dutifully to God's rule. If we do this, how happy we should be, for God will provide for our sanctification, for our well-being, and for our peace and security! St. Paul says: 'If God be for us, who is against us?' (Rom. viii. 31). David says: 'Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me' (Ps. xxii. 4). If our prayer has in any sense reference to the future, it is a petition that God's everlasting reign may be accomplished, with a complete victory over all His enemies, and that we may reign with Him in His kingdom. How excellent, then, is this prayer, 'Thy kingdom come'! It fills us with hope. We may be poor, weak, and distressed now; but we look forward to reign with Christ in the kingdom of our Father, and we pray that we may realize our desires.

Devout Christian, remember ever that your Heavenly Father is a King, and that you are heir to His kingdom. Do not attach yourself inordinately to the things of this world, but strive to live in God's grace, and prepare yourself for the kingdom to come.

III. When we say, 'Thy kingdom come,' we pray for others as well as for ourselves. Alas! many men are not in the kingdom of God's Church, many are not children of grace, many do not seek the kingdom of God. We pray for all these, that they may come to know God as He should be known, and to serve Him as He should be served, that all men may come finally to the kingdom of God in Heaven. St. Paul says: 'Whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord, shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him, in Whom they have not believed? Or how shall they believe Him, of Whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

And how shall they preach unless they be sent ?' (Rom. x. 13-15). Let us pray that those who have not been received into the kingdom of God's Church, may yet hear the good tidings of the Gospel, and enter into the way of salvation. Let us pray that sinners who have departed from that way may be converted to it once more. Let us pray that the just may be preserved in God's grace and walk ever as children of His kingdom. God's children must not be dupes of the world's seductions, nor slaves of vicious habits; they must be adorned with the vesture of His grace and observe the laws of His kingdom.

Devout Christian, if you should ever cease to enjoy the liberty of the children of God, you will then be the slave of Satan. Happily you make it your joy and your duty to serve God: this is the condition of your reigning with Him in His kingdom. Be not seduced from His service. Ask Mary, the Queen of Heaven, to obtain for you a true spirit of submission to God's sovereignty, and a zeal for the spread of His kingdom.

August 25.

'THY WILL BE DONE.'

I. MEN must never put themselves in opposition to God, for their happiness and their perfection depend upon their doing God's will. Our Lord has taught us to pray, saying: 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.' It is not enough to praise God with our lips, we must also do His will. How important this is, we learn from our Lord's words: "Not everyone that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven: but he that doeth the will of My Father Who is in Heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven' (St. Matt. vii. 21). Our prayer, dictated by our desire that God may be duly honoured and obeyed, means: May we, and may all men, submit ever to Thy Divine ordinances; may we do so in as perfect a manner as the blessed in Heaven submit to them, and we pray for grace to enable us to do this. That this prayer will be acceptable to God we learn not only from its having been taught us by His Divine Son, but also from our Lord's assurances of love for all who seek ever to accomplish God's will. He has said: 'Whosoever shall do the will of God, he is My brother, and My sister and mother' (St. Mark iii. 35). Then St. John says: 'He that doth the will of God abideth for ever' (1 St. John ii. 17). God will be pleased when we ask for grace to do His will, for it will be an acknowledgment of His sovereignty and perfections, and of our need of Him and dependence upon Him, and it will manifest our desire to submit ourselves in all things to Him.

Devout Christian, make it ever your happiness to conform at all times with God's will. Love His commands, which are ever wise and beneficent, and embrace dutifully God's ordinances both in prosperity and in adversity.

In saying the 'Our Father,' pray for grace to do these things.

II. Both wisdom and expediency suggest to us to do God's will. We act contrary to it when we commit sin or expose ourselves, without adequate reason, to the danger of sin, or become the voluntary cause of sin in others. To do any of these things is evil and disastrous; but what God demands of us is always good, wise, and beneficial (1 Tim. i. 8). Our fulfilment of His commands is the practical test of holiness and dutifulness. Men who become a law to themselves, and follow their own whims and fancies, deprive themselves of that reassurance and of that contentment, which are experienced by those who seek ever to comply with the Divine law, and who dutifully embrace the dispensations of Divine Providence. When we say, 'Thy will be done,' we ask only that we may know God's will and do it; but we do not seek to know the reason of the Divine ordinances, nor do we ask that they may be according to our own particular wishes or designs. We pray as David did when he said: 'Teach me to do Thy will because Thou art my God' (Ps. cxlii. 10). We do not, however, limit the application of our prayer to our own case; we also pray that always and everywhere and by everyone God's will may be faithfully accomplished. We express our desire that God may be dutifully served by all His creatures. This, then, is the prayer of God's true servants, who wish to see His sway acknowledged loyally and constantly by all.

Devout Christian, enter into the true spirit of this prayer. Offer to your Heavenly Father your heart and will to love Him and serve Him all your days. 'What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou fear the Lord thy God, and walk in His ways, and love Him, and serve the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul?' (Deut. x. 12).

III. Our Lord teaches us with what dispositions and how perfectly we should desire to do God's will when He instructs us to pray, saying: 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.' We must transfer ourselves in spirit to

Heaven to see with what readiness and joy, with what entire devotedness, and how fully the blessed do God's will there. Oh, how different are their dispositions and compliance from what we find in many Christians who wish to be considered God's servants on earth! How many there are in the world who object to the Divine ordinances, and who seek to shirk compliance with the obligations imposed on them by the Divine law! How many there are who deliberately offend against the Divine commands, and who neglect or sin against the duties of their state of life! How many there are who murmur and complain, in a manner displeasing to God, under the various trials of life! How many, too, there are who prefer to do their own will, or the will of the world or society, rather than to submit themselves to the Divine will! All these are both wicked and foolish. It should not be so. But how shall we correct and submit our will, unless grace assists us? Our Lord teaches us to pray for grace; we pray that we may be enabled to do all God's will with a joyfulness, whole-heartedness, and fulness, resembling what is seen in the blessed in Heaven.

Devout Christian, reflect upon the perfection of disposition and of compliance which the service of God demands and which will render your service pleasing to God. Would that all men on earth joined the blessed in Heaven in offering God an acceptable service! Beseech Mary, your heavenly Mother, who was ever perfectly devoted to the Divine will, to obtain for you a truer sense of your obligation, and the grace to prefer God's will to every other consideration.

August 26.

'GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.'

I. We come now, in the Lord's Prayer, to make special petition for our own needs of body and soul. This prayer, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' both acknowledges and inculcates our dependence upon God. In vain will be our efforts, unless God bestows what we need; but He must be besought. He knows all our wants; but He requires us to manifest our dependence upon Him, and to petition Him to supply them. This is one of the particular objects of prayer: 'Ask, and you shall receive.' St. Paul says: 'Be nothing solicitous: but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God' (Phil. iv. 6). This petition of the Lord's Prayer may be very comprehensive in its object, for it has in view the needs of both soul and body. O Heavenly Father, we seem to say, vouchsafe to impart to my mind the bread of instruction (St. Luke iv. 4), to prepare my soul to receive sacramentally or spiritually the Food of the Divine Eucharist (St. Matt. vi. 11), and the heavenly nourishment of Thy grace; and deign also to provide for all my bodily and temporal needs. Be a father to me and to all Thy children, in these our necessities; for to Thee do we, and must we, look, since all things come to us from Thy bounty.

Devout Christian, let this petition keep you ever in mind of your dependence upon God's providence. Many blessings will come to you if you address it to God with confidence in His bounty, leaving yourself in His hands as to the kind and measure of the gifts you ask for, and as to the time of their bestowal. Let it remind you of the fatherly love which God bears you, and of your duty to petition Him in all your needs and in all your works.

II. The wording of this petition implies the duty of addressing ourselves every day to our Heavenly Father. When we say, 'Give us this day,' our petition is for to-day's wants and not for what we shall need on the morrow and afterwards; it is therefore a petition which we must renew every day. The wording of it also reminds us of the uncertainty of life, for we pray only for our present needs of to-day. We may not live till to-morrow, so why should we make petition for a time we may not see? As every day has its needs, we must every day beseech God to deign to supply them. Prayer itself is therefore one of our daily needs. St. Paul says: 'Pray without ceasing' (1 Thess. v. 17). How shall we expect the constant help and support of God's grace, which is so necessary to us, if we do not make humble daily supplication for it? Men are spiritually weak and fall under temptation, and yield to dejection under the trials of life because they fail to make this necessary supplication. Their condition is depicted by David's words: 'I am smitten as grass, and my heart is withered: because I forgot to eat my bread' (Ps. ci. 5). How different is the condition of Christians who recognize their need of grace and of prayer which brings its aid, and who therefore recite every day their Lord's Prayer with earnest and thoughtful piety! To such as these God is truly a father: Him they love, and to Him they have recourse with filial confidence.

Devout Christian, do not fail to make your daily supplication to your Heavenly Father, 'Who keepeth truth for ever: Who executeth judgment for them that suffer wrong: Who giveth food to the hungry. The Lord looseth them that are fettered: the Lord enlighteneth the blind. The Lord lifteth up them that are cast down: the Lord loveth the just' (Ps. cxlv. 7, 8).

III. This petition, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' manifests a spirit of charity. Christian charity is the most precious ingredient in prayer and in every good work, and it imparts a lustre wherever it exists. How pleasing to God our prayer will be if we ask His blessing and the gifts of His providence for soul and body, not only for ourselves,

but also for all others! How acceptable to Him it will be if we pray for His bounties also, for all who are dear to us, for all who depend upon us, for all who are in special need, for all who are strangers to us, and even for all who are opposed to us! Has not our Lord said: 'Pray for them that persecute and calumniate you' (St. Matt. v. 44)? May not others who fail in their duty of prayer, receive the blessings of Providence because we have prayed that they may receive them? Will not, therefore, our prayer deserve to count for us as a spiritual work of mercy? Much good is done, and much spiritual profit is gained by those who pray for others in a charitable spirit. Do not we ourselves receive many blessings through the prayers of the Church and through the countless prayers which go up for mankind to our Heavenly Father from every part of the world? St. James says: 'Pray one for another, that you may be saved. For the continual prayer of a just man availeth much' (v. 16).

Devout Christian, extend your charity to all men. Pray for blessings for all, and you will receive blessings in return. Let prayer be sweet to your spiritual taste, for it pleases your Heavenly Father, and brings upon yourself and others the bounties of His hand. Learn of Mary, who ever offers up fervent supplications for her children, to pray daily for others, and beseech her to obtain for you the supply of your daily needs for soul and body, and the grace to use wisely the gifts of God's bounty.

August 27.

'FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES.'

I. We come now to a study of God's mercy, for our Lord teaches us to pray daily for the forgiveness of our sins. This duty is also inculcated by Holy Church in many of her prayers. We have then, with all humility, to recognize that we are sinners, and that we need God's pardon; but what will this knowledge profit us if we be not moved with a sincere desire and determination of amendment? If we would obtain God's forgiveness we must be in dispositions to receive it, and we know that these must include true sorrow and a firm purpose of amendment. Our Lord teaches us to pray, saying: 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.' He invites us to a daily conversion; but His gracious invitation affords us the consoling assurance of our receiving a daily pardon, for why would He instruct us to ask for forgiveness if forgiveness will not be granted? This petition of the Lord's Prayer reminds us of our great fickleness and frailty. Our faults are daily; so let us daily beseech our Heavenly Father for pardon. We are also taught by this petition that in prayer we must not only worship God and ask Him to provide for our wants, but we must, moreover, beg pardon for our sins.

Devout Christian, live ever in humility on account of your faultiness, but let not the thought of your transgressions prevent you from turning to God to ask for pardon. Imitate the wise man of whom it is written: 'He will give his heart to resort early to the Lord that made him, and he will pray in the sight of the Most High. He will open his mouth in prayer, and will make supplication for his sins' (Ecclus. xxxix. 6, 7).

II. This petition of the Lord's Prayer teaches us that

there should be a daily reckoning with ourselves concerning our sins and a daily turning to God to ask for pardon. It reminds us of our duty of avoiding sin and of striving for holiness of life, and it tells us of God's immense mercy. If God is great, if He is holy, if He is just, He is also merciful. He is willing to pardon the offences of His children, if only with a truly repentant heart they supplicate Him for forgiveness. If, then, we have done this, let us rise from our prayer comforted and reassured. How sad is the condition of men who will not pray and ask God's forgiveness! They carry their guilt about with them, and they remain subject to all the evil consequences of their sin. If this petition means, 'May the sins of all the world be forgiven,' it is a prayer for forgiveness, not only for ourselves, but also for all others. It is, therefore, a prayer for the conversion of sinners, a prayer that they may be brought into proper dispositions to receive God's pardon. If we pray with this meaning, we manifest our love of God, desiring that sin may cease, and that all hearts may be dutifully turned to Him; and we show also our love of our neighbour, praying that he may be delivered from the great evil of sin, and from all its terrible consequences.

Devout Christian, be filled with zeal for God's glory. Your sins and the sins of the world are displeasing to your Heavenly Father, and opposed to His glory. Let your prayer mean, 'Forgive me and all men our offences against Thee, and bring us all to true amendment of life.' Thank our Lord for teaching you to confide in His mercy. David says: 'Thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild: and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Thee' (Ps. lxxxv. 5).

III. Our Lord teaches us in this petition that we shall not be in dispositions to receive God's pardon if, while we ask it, we have an unforgiving heart towards our neighbour. He teaches us to say: 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.' If, then, we do not forgive our neighbour, how shall we expect God to forgive us? Our Christianity must bear the distinguishing stamp and mark of mutual charity. We recall the concluding words of one of the parables: 'His lord being

angry, delivered him to the torturers until he paid all the debt. So also shall My Heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts' (St. Matt. xviii. 34, 35). We are also reminded of other lessons of our Divine Teacher: 'Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. . . . Forgive, and you shall be forgiven' (St. Luke vi. 36, 37). If, then, we desire God's pardon, and really mean what the words of our prayers signify, we must not bear malice in our heart against our neighbour; while we harbour enmity and revengeful feelings, and steel our heart against forgiveness, in our relations with our neighbour, we look in vain for God's forgiveness of our sins.

Devout Christian, from the terms and meaning of this petition of the Lord's Prayer, learn to admire the ways and far-reaching of God's holiness. See how it demands in us dispositions conformable in a certain measure with itself, if we are to be made partakers of grace. Vain are the hopes of men who expect to obtain grace while they make no effort to dispose themselves to receive it. God wisely and justly appoints and demands conditions upon which grace will be bestowed. Banish from your heart all malice and vindictiveness, that you may be disposed to enjoy the riches of God's mercy. Beseech Mary to obtain for you a true and lasting spirit of compunction that your daily petition for pardon may be heard.

August 28.

'LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION.'

I. We come now to pray for strength and protection in the time of temptation. That time occurs very often, so we do well to beg every day for the grace we need to enable us to withstand, despise, and overcome the various temptations we may encounter. God permits them; but He Himself cannot be said to tempt us to sin against Himself. Therefore does St. James say: 'Let no man, when he is tempted, say that he is tempted by God. For God is not a tempter of evils, and He tempteth no man' (St. Jas. i. 13). There are temptations of many kinds, and through our own perversity, even trials which should help to sanctify us become to us an occasion of temptation. Satan lays his snares for our soul. It is in his power to suggest evil, but he cannot force our compliance with his evil suggestions. He strives to stir us to indulge pride, envy, anger, sloth, impurity, and other vices, and to move us to unbelief and to rebellion against God. He tempts us to mistrust in Divine Providence, to indifferentism in religion, to presumption, and to despair. How subtle and how persistent he is in his ways! He counts many victims. We must despise his suggestions. We must shield ourselves under the teachings and example of our Divine Saviour, and we must have recourse to fervent prayer.

Devout Christian, temptations are one of the trials which make your cross, but be not disheartened by them. They may recur, but only to give you further occasion of resistance, and of merit. Be comforted by the thought that God does not wish you to be overcome; but our Lord teaches you that your duty is to pray for grace, if you would obtain shelter and strength in the hour of temptation.

II. Many temptations come from our surroundings.

Often there are about us elements of danger which affect us silently and secretly, such as the tone of the society in which we live, of the newspapers and books we read, and of the class of work in which we are employed. One of the greatest perils met with in the world is the temptation to disregard the supernatural, and to reckon only with what falls under our senses. Many men treat religion, and its duties and teachings, in a speculative and unreal way. Many men so far set their heart on worldly gains, pleasures, and advantages, as to neglect obedience to God's law and the needs of their own immortal soul. We are surrounded by many whose lives we should not imitate, and whose views we should not share. The world presents us with a spectacle of vanity, worldliness, injustice, and forgetfulness of God, which may make a disastrous impression on the mind of the weak, and especially of the young. Things are not reckoned at their true value, nor are they set in their proper order. Sometimes, too, there are secret, and even open, temptations to break God's commandments. O servants of God, be not ashamed of your Master, nor of His religion and His laws. You are surrounded by foes. Pray for strength, for the light of a clear faith and discernment, and for the grace of Divine charity. Do not desert the standard of God and of Heaven.

Devout Christian, without prayer you may easily fall a victim to some or other of the temptations met with in society, or in the circumstances of your surroundings. Despise every allurement which would lead you to neglect your duty to God, or the all-important work of your salvation.

III. Temptations also come from the base passions of our own nature. Some men are led away by temptations to avarice, intemperance, and impurity, while others are overcome by vicious enmities and spiritual or bodily sloth. These various weaknesses and passions are the cause of many sins of commission and omission, which lead to the loss of numberless souls. Our Lord teaches us to pray daily for the heavenly aid of grace to fight against and overcome all these temptations, and we shall not pray in

vain. Witness in proof of this assurance the glorious victories of the Saints over the weaknesses of fallen nature. Consider their humble, meek, pure, mortified, and charitable lives. They vanquished their spiritual and carnal enemies, and they have received their crowns in Heaven. In vain, however, shall we petition our Heavenly Father for protection and strength under temptation if we ourselves expose ourselves unnecessarily to temptation, and if we run into danger. We pray, saying: 'Lead us not into temptation.' We must recognize the danger, we must acknowledge our own weakness, we must avoid danger, and we must pray earnestly for God's help. In this petition, as in the petitions which precede it, we pray for others as well as for ourselves. We are all soldiers fighting under the standard of Christ; we must desire protection and triumph for all the forces, and not for ourselves only.

Devout Christian, you cannot be valiant in the contest against evil, nor can you secure victory, without God's help. Be comforted by our Lord's assurance that this help will be granted you if only you seek it in humble, earnest, and constant prayer. While trusting in God's love and help, recommend yourself also with confidence to Mary's prayers. She is the 'Help of Christians,' and she will safeguard you in time of temptation.

August 29.

'DELIVER US FROM EVIL.'

I. THE connection of this petition with that which immediately precedes it in the Lord's Prayer teaches us that the chief evil from which we pray to be delivered and protected is the evil of sin. This may be described as the only true evil, both on account of its own nature and of its terrible consequences. For deliverance we turn to Him Who alone can free us from sin. Our prayer, however, may receive a more comprehensive meaning, either from the purpose our Lord had when teaching us to use this form of words, or from our own intention in using it. In our mind an evil is anything which is detrimental to our spiritual or temporal well-being. We therefore desire to be protected from every misfortune, sickness, or calamity, which in God's eyes will not be for our good. Our Lord by 'evil' may have meant also the greatest of all evils—namely, eternal damnation, which is an evil irremediable and without end. Christians should ever shield themselves from every real evil by having recourse in prayer to their Heavenly Father. He is not a Father to no purpose. We may believe that many calamities befall men because of their utter disregard of God, His laws, His providence, and His love. The repentant Jews said: 'Wherefore evils have cleaved fast to us' (Bar. iii. 4). This was because they had not heeded God's voice. The calamities which often befell the Jews arose from their turning from God. These calamities were foretold where God said through Moses: 'I will heap evils upon them' (Deut. xxxii. 24).

Devout Christian, God will protect you from evil according to His promise if you love Him and fear Him; but you must ever pray for His loving protection. Our Lord teaches you to do this.

II. What our Lord calls 'evil' must indeed be evil. Alas! that men seem to make little of it! What greater evil can be imagined than that which will cause men to lose grace and Heaven, to be for ever separated from God, and to be punished for ever in Hell? This is the evil of mortal sin, and what leads to it—therefore moral perversity. Oh, when will men aim with true earnestness at religiousness of mind, at purity of heart, and at righteousness in their ways? When will they be truly wise? Listen to the inspired words of Solomon: 'If wisdom shall enter into thy heart, and knowledge please thy soul: counsel shall keep thee, and prudence shall preserve thee. That thou mayest be delivered from the evil way, and from the man that speaketh perverse things: [from those] who leave the right way, and walk by dark ways: who are glad when they have done evil' (Prov. ii. 10-14) In vain do men pray, saying 'Deliver us from evil,' while they perversely and deliberately go in the way of evil. There is happily another way—namely, the path of a truly Christian life, the holy way of God's commandments, of piety, and of virtue. This is the way of spiritual joy and peace that leads to everlasting life. May God, then, deliver us from the way of moral perversity! When David was converted, he declared how much he loved God's holy law, and he went on to say: 'I have restrained my feet from every evil way: that I may keep Thy words' (Ps. cxviii. 101).

Devout Christian, you need ever to pray to be delivered from evil, for sometimes just men have fallen away. We are not justified of ourselves, nor shall we remain just only by our own effort. Pray earnestly for grace, and for God's protection and help, without which you will surely fall away.

III. Temporal calamities may rightly be deemed evils, because usually they are accompanied by many moral evils, and by many human miseries. Distress, bodily injury, mental diseases, sickness, bereavements, and sudden death, come also in the category of evils, because of their effect on men's minds. When we pray to be delivered

from evils of this class, we do so with a mind resigned to God's good pleasure; for in His designs there must always be a wise and beneficent purpose. We may, however, pray for a cessation of calamities and of all temporal evils, leaving the issue to God. This petition coming from a pious heart, and addressed to God on behalf of all men, may manifest a desire most pleasing to Him—namely, that all evil may cease. It may manifest a disposition like that of Saints who have exclaimed: 'When shall sin be no more? When shall all hearts beat with sincere love of God? When shall all men walk in the path of God's true servants? When shall they be able to say to their Heavenly Father what our Lord said: "I do always the things that please Him" (St. John viii. 29)?'

Devout Christian, let such be your sentiments and dispositions. Then will you be secure under the Divine protection; for God loves and protects those who serve Him with a good heart, and who desire that His service may be extended to embrace all mankind. It is written: 'No evils shall happen to him that feareth the Lord, but in temptation God will keep him, and deliver him from evils' (Ecclus. xxxiii. 1). Beseech Mary, the tender protectress of all her true children, to watch over you, and to obtain for you grace to avoid what is evil. May her prayers also plead for you to avert all calamities from yourself and from all who are dear to you!

August 30.

TEMPTATIONS.

I. Life is beset with temptations; this is by a Divine dispensation, therefore is it to be deemed wisely so ordained. Christians may feel the trial keenly, but they should not murmur under it. This form of trial has ever been incidental to life, and it is experienced by persons in every sphere and station, and of every age. That cannot be reckoned a misfortune which results in spiritual and eternal blessings. Now, of this kind of trial St. James says: 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him' (i. 12). By 'enduring temptation' the Apostle means bearing up against it, and remaining constant under it. These words ought to animate Christians with courage and with patience under the trial of temptation, and teach them that such a trial is not an evil, but really a blessing in disguise. Every rude temptation affords them an occasion of triumphing over their spiritual enemies, the devil, the world, or the flesh.

Devout Christian, be valiant in the warfare of life, and be not discouraged when you experience the assaults of various temptations. By God's grace you will be strong, and you will not be overcome. Under the strain of temptation call to mind the words of the Archangel Raphael to Tobias: 'Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee' (Tob. xii. 13).

II. Temptations are useful to Christians because they tend to keep them humble. Christians, when assaulted by them, perceive the strength of their own evil tendencies which at other times seem to lie dormant; and this cannot but cause them confusion. They have to acknowledge

their own powerlessness, and their dependence on God for succour and relief. Without God's help they may fall and be overcome, even as Adam, David, Solomon, and Peter fell and were overcome; without His help they may commit even grievous sins. They must beseech God for relief, even as St. Paul did (2 Cor. xii. 8) when he received our Lord's assurance: 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity.' In the humiliation of temptations are displayed the majesty and the power of true Christian holiness. Then is realized what is said by the holy writer: 'No evils shall happen to him that feareth the Lord: but in temptation God will keep him and deliver him from evils' (Ecclus. xxxiii. 1). Christians should humble themselves under temptation, not only because they recognize their own weakness, but also because of their ignorance or want of perception of all the deceits and dangers accompanying the temptation. They must not trust to themselves, but pray for light and guidance as well as for strength.

Devout Christian, humble yourself in the hour of temptation, and this will prove a source of safety; for, humbly recognizing your own weakness and your own blindness, you will turn for light and succour to the Divine source of all spiritual discernment and strength. Then may you feel secure.

III. Our Lord counsels watching and praying for security against the power of temptations: 'Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation' (St. Matt. xxvi. 41). When Christians are on the watch against spiritual dangers and assaults, they become aware of the first appearance of the enemy, and they offer an immediate resistance, or they at once escape by a timely flight. And when they pray, they give evidence of their determination not to yield to the temptation, and they employ the surest means of obtaining the Divine help in their danger. St. Paul says: 'Brethren, be strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of His power' (Eph. vi. 10). Prayer animates them with confidence, and sustains them while the temptation lasts. And if scruples arise after the danger is past, they

may readily be put aside when it is remembered that during it recourse was had to God by prayer. Christians must be careful not to expose themselves unnecessarily to temptation; many fall victims to it because they do this, and dally within the sphere of danger; many because they delay to use the means that insure victory; and many because they do not keep a watch over their senses, and because they neglect the duty of daily prayer.

Devout Christian, mistrust your own strength. 'Take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect' (Eph. vi. 13). Detest all that is evil, and pray to be preserved from all evil. Beseech Mary to obtain for you grace to perceive the snares of your spiritual enemies, and to be strong and constant in the time of temptation. Let no interior weakness or exterior attraction cause you to be unfaithful to grace, but prove yourself at all times a good soldier of Christ.

August 31.

OUR TRIBULATIONS.

I. There must be special value in sufferings and other trials, seeing that spiritual writers deem them so profitable for our soul. They will come whether we desire them or not. We found out long since that we are not in a world of delights and of rest. We learn how St. Barnabas and St. Paul, encouraging their disciples to persevere in the faith, taught them that 'through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God' (Acts. xiv. 21). Holy David says: 'Many are the afflictions of the just' (Ps. xxxiii. 20). Our Lord said to St. Teresa in a vision: 'Dost thou think that merit consists in enjoying? No; but rather in working, in suffering, in loving. He is most beloved by My Father, on whom He lays the heaviest crosses, if these sufferings are accepted and borne with love. By what can I better show My love for thee, than by choosing for thee what I chose for Myself?' There will yet be a time of receiving reward; it is now a time of meriting. We merit by labour and sufferings, and by bearing our tribulations patiently. These tribulations are not sent to be an occasion of our losing our soul, but as a help to our salvation. They will forge for our soul golden chains of merit and of charity now, and they will earn for us beautiful jewels in our crown in Heaven. St. Paul says: 'Now all chastisement for the present indeed seemeth not to bring with it joy, but sorrow; but afterwards it will yield, to them that are exercised by it, the most peaceable fruit of justice' (Heb. xii. 11).

Devout Christian, be resolved to set your trials at their true value, and to submit patiently to them. Pray for grace to embrace dutifully the dispensations of God's providence under adversity.

II. Thomas à Kempis says: 'The chastisements of God humble and purify the soul, confound our pride, and dissipate all vainglory'—that is, when they are received humbly and borne patiently. It is written: 'Take all that shall be brought upon thee: and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience' (Ecclus. ii. 4). Patience renders our trials endurable; but if we meet them with impatience, we shall feel them all the more. We must avoid all murmuring and manifestation of discontent in time of sickness, or if we are afflicted with bodily infirmities, or if we suffer bereavement in our family, or if we meet with temporal misfortunes. These are some of the trials incidental to our earthly career. Instead of repining under them, we ought to pray that the all-holy and all-wise will of God may be accomplished, and that God may be glorified by our sufferings. How few men, alas, act thus in the time of trial! Do not some seek to drown their sorrow and disappointment by excesses in intemperance and dissipation? How unchristian such conduct is! Does it invoke a blessing, and Divine aid and consolation? Does it bring any lasting and effective remedy to men's distressed feelings or straitened circumstances? Does it not presently accentuate the distress, and delay the true remedy?

Devout Christian, carry your sorrows to the feet of your Divine Saviour, and address yourself to His most compassionate Heart. Meditate on the sorrows of Jesus and Mary, and learn in the school of the Sacred Passion to bear yours with patience, and with dutiful submission to the Divine will.

III. Thomas à Kempis, having described the soul's experiences in the season of joy, goes on to say: 'But the season of trial comes at last, and the grace of devotion is withdrawn; then winter comes, in ice and cold, in the gloom of the intellect, and in fear of soul. Then patience, most needful to our wants as it is pleasing to God, comes to our aid. In such trials our advance in virtue grows apace, and by patience will our eternal recompense hereafter be increased.' What is here said was exemplified in the case

of holy Job. In the day of his dire distress, he remembered the joyous times that had passed away, and he exclaimed: 'Who will grant me, that I might be according to the months past, according to the days in which God kept me? When His lamp shined over my head, and I walked by His light in darkness?' (Job. xxix. 2, 3). But Job pleased God by his patience. He is a model to all time. In persecutions, in contempt, in desolation of spirit, in the hour of temptation, let us ever trust in God. He who has withdrawn the season of joy and peace can restore it to us. It is written in the history of Job: 'The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before' (Job xlii. 10). After our Lord's temptation in the desert, and again after His agony in the garden, Angels presented themselves and comforted Him.

Devout Christian, let St. Paul's words console you: 'That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory' (2 Cor. iv. 17). Be assured that clouds of sorrow are soon dissipated. Ask Mary, the 'Comfort of the Afflicted,' to obtain for you the grace to turn your trials to good account. Learn from her perfect conduct in her sorrows to practise silence and patience.

September 1.

RECOURSE TO OUR LORD IN TRIBULATION.

I. The holy Gospels tell us of many afflicted persons who sought a remedy for their ills from our Divine Lord. These persons did not seek it in vain. Their conduct should teach us to do in like manner. We should recognize that our trials come by God's ordination or permission, and we should therefore submit dutifully to His will, and bear them with patience and resignation. It will not, however, be contrary to this dutifulness to seek from God a remedy for our ills. Does not our Lord invite us to do this, saying: 'Come to Me all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you' (St. Matt. xi. 28)? It is in accordance with the Divine decrees that our portion in this world should be one of labour, anxiety, and suffering; and it is God's will that we should at all times recognize our own weakness and insufficiency, and our entire dependence upon Him. Therefore should we have recourse to Him in prayer, and avail ourselves of the channels of grace. Many, too, are our necessities of soul and body. We should say with David: 'Our soul waiteth for the Lord: for He is our helper and protector' (Ps. xxxii. 20). Our Lord, Who gave succour and healing to the many afflicted persons who appealed to His compassion, will not disregard our prayer when we have recourse with confidence to Him in our sorrow and distress.

Devout Christian, renew your confidence in the tenderness and goodness of the Sacred Heart of our Lord. Out of that treasury of Divine Goodness come daily blessings to countless souls that have recourse to our Lord. David says: 'The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him: to all that call upon Him in truth' (Ps. cxliv. 18).

II. Many are the tribulations of God's servants. The

portion of some men is one of labour, fatigue, and anxiety, in seeking sustenance for themselves and for their family. Some men suffer from a change of fortune; nothing prospers with them. In other cases there are bereavements; the mainstay of the family, or one who was its hope, or one who brought comfort to a home, is taken away by death. Or, again, sickness comes, causing poverty and a general upset. Such are some of the trials attending us, and creating many necessities. How should we view them ? We should regard them as happening by a special dispensation of Divine Providence. Even as in the case of Jonas, when God prepared an ivy, and afterwards a worm to destroy the ivy (Jonas iv. 6, 7), so should we recognize that it is through God that come to us our joys and our sorrows. But what should be our conduct under our tribulations ? We need the help of grace to enable us to bear them patiently. For this we must have recourse to our Lord in fervent prayer, and we may also receive Holy Communion. At the same time, we may also have recourse to Him to beg to be relieved from our afflictions, or to ask Him to console us under them. This is not the conduct of all. For some persons try to run away from the Cross, or they think to drown their sorrow and cares in dissipation; or, again, they murmur and complain, and even speak disrespectfully of God.

Devout Christian, be valiant and patient under your trials. Be assured that God has decreed everything for the best. In His loving designs are fixed the kind of trial, the time it shall come upon you, its duration, and the hour of relief. But pray as you will, provided that it be with due conformity with God's good pleasure.

III. Tribulations in the spiritual order also fall upon us. The assaults of our spiritual enemies may disturb the soul. All men have not acquired such control over their imagination and feelings as not to be affected by the assaults of evil passions, or the temptations of evil spirits. Even when men are clad in steel armour they feel the blows of their adversary. To the weak, who yet wish to be faithful to God, temptations are a constant source of

anxiety, and, if they yield to them, of remorse. Habits of venial sin are also a source of trouble to the soul. Some men are wanting in courage and constancy in the practice of virtue, and in fulfilling the duties of a devout Christian life, and they experience the trial of despondency and discouragement. When men fall into sin, the greatest of spiritual tribulations has befallen them, from which no Angel or Saint, but only God Himself, can extract them. In all these cases of spiritual tribulation men must have recourse to our Lord. He promises His help and protection to all who in sincerity seek Him. Who does not acknowledge the necessity of fervent daily prayer? St. Paul says: 'Therefore take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect' (Eph. vi. 13). What happy results we may expect if at all times, especially in time of tribulation, we have recourse to our Lord! From Him may we expect light in our darkness, strength in our weakness, comfort in our sorrow, assurance when we are afraid, refreshment under the burdens of life, and mercy and pardon when we have sinned.

Devout Christian, recall with satisfaction our Lord's comforting words: 'Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you' (St. Matt. vii. 7). In answer to confident and humble prayer, our Lord will unlock to all suppliants the treasury of His grace and mercy. Even as, when on earth, He listened to the appeals of the afflicted, and gave succour and healing, so will He at all times give ear to humble supplication. Ask Mary, your powerful Advocate and Protectress, to obtain for you the grace of a true sense of your own insufficiency, and the grace also of confidence in the aid of her Divine Son.

September 2.

BENEFIT OF TRIALS.

I. God has ordained all things in wisdom, and we must never question His appointments. He has said by His prophet: 'My thoughts are not your thoughts: nor your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are My ways exalted above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts' (Isa. lv. 8, 9). If, then, God permits trials to weigh upon us, and takes away earthly comforts from us, there will certainly be some beneficent and merciful purpose in it, such as to make us look up to heavenly blessings, or to further our progress in real and interior virtue, which is the soul's brightest adornment. When material, temporal advantages are withdrawn from us, our soul is freer to turn to such as are spiritual, and these are more profitable and lasting. St. Paul says: 'We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen, are temporal: but the things which are not seen, are eternal' (2 Cor. iv. 18). Let us be convinced that our trials are for our good, for God knows what is best for us. Thomas à Kempis says that the chastisements of God humble and purify the soul, confound our pride, and dissipate vainglory ('The Valley of Lilies').

Devout Christian, beware of taking a wrong view of the trials of life, especially when they arise from a loss of fortune, or from other temporal disadvantages. Is it not more important to atone for sin, to draw nearer to God, and to earn a greater heavenly reward, than to amass wealth, and to stand well with the world?

II. The Archangel Raphael said to Tobias: 'Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee' (Tob. xii. 13). And we read in

the Life of St. Teresa that our Lord said to her: 'He is most beloved by My Father, on whom He lays the heaviest crosses, if these sufferings are accepted and borne with love.' God would not send crosses to His friends if they were not for their good, and with some view to their everlasting welfare. If borne with love, our trials will be profitable to us both here and hereafter. St. Teresa says that the cross is hard to those who drag it after them, but not to those who embrace it. By bearing willingly and patiently the trials which God sends us, we prove that we love Him. Their benefit may not strike us immediately, but only when we come to experience their fruits. St. Paul says: 'Now all chastisement for the present indeed seemeth not to bring with it joy, but sorrow: but afterwards it will yield, to them that are exercised by it, the most peaceable fruit of justice' (Heb. xii. 11). In God's providence, our trials are intended to detach our heart from too great a love of the world, and of worldly joys and advantages; for this love often leads to the neglect of religion, or to half-heartedness in attending to our spiritual welfare. Moreover, they afford us an opportunity of bearing something for God, and of rendering some satisfaction to Him for our sins. In these and other ways, our trials, borne patiently, will prove of priceless value to us now, and they will merit for us a degree of glory and reward hereafter.

Devout Christian, examine the dispositions in which you embrace your appointed trials. Do you murmur under them? Have you any desire to resemble your crucified Lord, and to imitate Him in His love of the Cross?

III. God knows what is best for us; and, moreover, in sending trials to His faithful servants, He brings about what will tend most to His own glory—the end which God must necessarily have in view in all His works. Will we not lend ourselves willingly, and even joyfully, to what tends to so noble an end? Ah! only let us be animated with a true love of God, and we will know how to embrace all God's appointments. Should we not, in all our trials, leave ourselves without reserve in His hands? Will we not trust Him Who has prepared for us everlasting joys in

His kingdom ? Does He not love us ? and does He not ordain all things for our good ? It would be very wrong to think otherwise. While we wonder at God's ways, let us acknowledge our own short-sightedness in not setting due value on our passing trials. Let us be assured that God, in all His dealings with us, takes everything into account, and so arranges all the circumstances of our trials that they may fall in with the wisdom of His loving designs. Let us sincerely regret our having been fretful or discontented, and our not having been resigned, under our trials. Our duty to God, and our true interests, demand on our part entire confidence in the wisdom and goodness of the Divine dispensations, and entire resignation to God's most holy will. St. Peter says: ' Be you humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of God: that He may exalt you in the time of visitation ' (1 St. Pet. v. 6).

Devout Christian, pray for a lively faith in the Gospel teaching concerning the benefit of sufferings and other earthly trials. Let your heart be ready to embrace God's will in adversity. Ask Mary, the ' Mother of Dolours,' to obtain for you grace to bear every trial in a manner to give glory to God, and to win His everlasting rewards.

September 3.

THE SNARES OF SATAN.

I. CHRISTIANS are ever exposed to the wiles of Satan. He is a master in deceit. This is seen in the history of the fall of our first parents. What hope, then, is there for Christians if they do not watch and pray? Satan is not an imaginary being. We have in Holy Scripture the record of his tempting our first parents and our Divine Saviour; and St. Paul tells us that our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers; and he says: 'Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil' (Eph. vi. 11). By his deceits he strives to undermine faith and virtue, and to make men undervalue religion. If he cannot imbue the mind with disgust for religious practices, he tries to create a spirit of weariness and discouragement, and to persuade men that the restraints imposed upon them by the holy teaching and prescriptions of the Gospel are unreasonable and galling. He suggests reasons for disregarding the injunctions of the Divine Law, and makes deceitful promises of gain and satisfaction, with a view to seduce men and lead them to sins contrary to justice and purity. By his deceits, too, he leads them from a love of duty, and he gradually brings them into ways of indifference, remissness, and spiritual ruin.

Devout Christian, you are not free from the snares of this wicked monster. Take alarm when you perceive them, and have instant recourse to prayer, or you may, like our first parents, become a victim of his deceit. Prayer will bring God to your help, and will afford you consolation under your temptation.

II. Christians, as soon as they experience temptation,

should reflect that it is a deadly enemy who is assailing them. The enemy has no good purpose in laying his snares, and in directing his attack; his object is to lead Christians into sin, and to bring about their spiritual ruin and their damnation. Of this wily foe St. Peter says: 'Whom resist ye, strong in faith.' Some souls are brought to spiritual death by a violent and fatal temptation, and others by repeated assaults, or by a slow poison; some by allurements congenial to their own evil proclivities, and others by the seductive snares of false friends or of evil-minded persons. In laying his snares, Satan is careful to conceal the evil and fatal character of the sin that will be committed, and all its disastrous consequences. The sinner is not invited to examine these things, but he is led away from God and His grace, from duty and from virtue, as it were, blindly and under delusion. It is only when he has committed the sin, and fallen under the power of his enemy, that he realizes the malice and the unworthiness of his conduct, and the miserable bondage of his changed condition.

Devout Christian, take warning when your conscience signals alarm. Let no influence lead you from the region and surroundings of Christian virtue, piety, and spiritual peace. No true friend would be so base as to seek to do this; but your Satanical foe will aim at doing it. If you yield to him, he will lead you ever further from God, until he will have brought you into a deplorable bondage.

III. Do Christians realize what they have done by yielding to Satan? Do they recognize how false are the promises by which they have been deluded, and how vain and unreal the satisfactions obtained as a result of their sinful conduct? Let them measure in the scales of true heavenly justice their losses and their gains. By mortal sin they have abandoned God to fall under the yoke of Satan; they have cast away the priceless gift of Divine grace to bring upon themselves the guilt and punishment of sin, and they have for a passing sinful satisfaction bartered their heavenly inheritance to become children of wrath, with everlasting punishment in Hell for their por-

tion. Satan's victory over them is to himself a small gain, but his victims suffer irreparable loss—at least, they are powerless of themselves to repair their loss. Let, then, Christians realize how dangerous are the snares of Satan. These snares are laid secretly and insidiously: they will entrap the indiscreet and the unwary.

Devout Christian, beware of the many snares to which you may be exposed—beware of delusive vanity, dangerous flattery, seductive affections, thinly veiled impiety, attractive allurements, pernicious literature, and unseemly amusements. Remember that Satan is ever ensnaring unwary souls. Unmask his treacherous deceits. Let religion be your secure guide and protection. Have recourse to Mary, the help of Christians. Pray for her continual intercession. Devotion to her will be your safeguard.

September 4.

WRESTLING WITH THE POWERS OF DARKNESS.

I. It would be foolish to think that we have not to contend with a Satanical foe. There is such a foe, as we know from the history of our Lord's temptation in the desert, and from the clear teaching of the Apostles. St. Paul says: 'Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers' (Eph. vi. 12). On the field of battle many have fallen, because they have not put on spiritual armour. We must know our adversary, and we must be prepared to resist his temptations, otherwise being of ourselves so weak, we may be overcome. Our enemy is the same wily serpent who ensnared our first parents, and caused their fall. He is described by our Lord as a murderer from the beginning, and the father of lies (St. John viii. 44). He is otherwise described as going about as a roaring lion (1 St. Pet. v. 8), and as a great dragon (Apoc. xii. 3; xx. 2). He is the greatest of deceivers; he hides his malice, cloaks his deformities, and casts a delusive charm about his workings. He insinuates liberty of thought and action. His deluded followers walk into the pit he has prepared for their ruin; they are caught in his snares. He chains them down to evil ways under the promise of liberty and pleasure; but he hides from them the misery of their bondage, and the fatal issue of their sins.

Devout Christian, you have reason to fear this Satanical foe, because of his power, and because of his deceit. St. Paul says: 'Satan himself transformeth himself into an angel of light' (2 Cor. xi. 14). To neglect prayer in time of temptation would be to fight without armour. Only under God's protection will you be safe.

II. Satan has his ministers; they are fallen principalities

and powers, and fallen Angels of other ranks, all bent on the ruin of God's servants. These evil spirits are unsparing, active, subtle, and persistent. Wherefore St. Paul says: 'Be strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of His power. Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil.' Satan would lead us in the downward path. Under his guidance we should fall away from piety and from the observance of God's commandments; we should gradually depart from virtue, and neglect the means of grace. He would suggest to us to follow the bent of our evil inclinations, to run after the pleasures of the world, and to avoid whatever is arduous in cultivating religion and virtue. He approaches us through our imagination and through our senses; and having obtained access by the way of the outer avenues to the soul, he enslaves our affections, and insinuates into our heart a love of what is evil. Satan gains the mastery by degrees. How many falls began in innocent pastimes, and then there followed those that were less innocent! Finally there was a voluntary exposure to danger, and then deliberate sin. The process is sometimes slow, but Satan is willing to wait. The first false step leads to another. When will men have a zeal for what is good? When this zeal is wanting, Satan easily finds an opportunity of laying his snares. He will lead his victims into neglect, sloth, idleness, and spiritual indifference, and from these beginnings the way to serious falls is easy.

Devout Christian, be ever on your guard against the approach of your enemy. Our Lord says: 'Watch and pray.' Do not give way to idleness. Do not omit your spiritual duties. Do not expose yourself to sin. Do not, by your own rashness or neglect, afford the enemy any opportunity to lead you to evil.

III. Satan is rightly called the Tempter, because he cannot force us, but can only tempt us. He uses his cunning according to our weaknesses. If our propensities are to self-indulgence, he will put before us the pleasures of the table, and the ways of an indolent life. If our propensities are to pride, he will suggest conceit, excessive

show, and aiming at a vain superiority. If our propensities are to carnal concupiscence, he will infest the mind with improper imaginations, and seek to draw us to unlawful desires. If our propensities are to anger, avarice, or envy, he will tempt us accordingly. We should therefore guard ourselves by noting what our predominant weakness is, and by resisting at once any suggestions or allurements which might lead us to yield to it. The persistence of Satan in his warfare with our soul should be a reason to encourage and sustain us; for we know that irresolution and indifference would give him the advantage. He will always be our enemy, and he will continue to tempt us even to the last hour of our life. We should watch over our thoughts and desires, and curb our imagination; we should avoid persons, places, and whatever might instigate our evil propensities; and we should use prayer and the other means of strengthening our soul. Confidence in God will tend ' to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one ' (Eph. vi. 16). Let us take our place among those faithful servants of God who will not break His most holy Law, and who refuse to be allured from their duty to God by any passing evil gratification, or by any bait presented by the Spirit of Darkness. Too late, perhaps, will his dupes discover his deceits. The consequences of sin should be weighed before its commission : then might men hold back.

Devout Christian, be resolved ever to cling to your loving Divine Saviour, and to walk in the holy way of a truly Christian life. Satan will then have no power over you, and his temptations will only make you more strenuous in doing what is right and what is pleasing to God. Be devout to your Guardian Angel, and often invoke his aid and protection. Ask Mary, the deadly enemy of Satan, to obtain for you grace to be strong and cautious in wrestling with the Powers of Darkness, lest you give them any advantage over you.

September 5.

MAN WOUNDED BY SIN.

I. THE wounded man with whom the Good Samaritan came up when on his journey, as recorded in our Lord's touching parable, is a figure to us of man wounded by sin. The wounds of sin are deep and grievous, reaching into every faculty of the soul, pervading the whole nature of man, affecting his present life, and destroying his happiness in the everlasting future. Every sin has a twofold consequence of guilt and punishment, and no human law or enactment, no consideration of merely human satisfaction, can step in to stay or to remove these inevitable consequences. When man fell into sin, it needed a Divine Redeemer to save him. Our Lord came as the 'Good Samaritan,' to apply the necessary remedy to poor wounded man. What was man's pitiable plight? The guilt of his sin, as by one fell stroke, had robbed him of peace, of original justice, of special Divine favours, of immortality, and of the heavenly inheritance, and had brought him under God's wrath and made him amenable to everlasting punishment. Man was wounded deeply in all that was pure, noble, strong, and holy in his being. To whom could he turn for remedy and relief, to obtain reconciliation with his Divine Creator, and restoration to the state of grace? Who would save him from the terrible consequences of his sin? God Himself alone could repair man's fall. Happily, He is a God of infinite mercy, as well as of infinite justice: He decreed to come Himself to heal man's wounds.

Devout Christian, be astonished at the decree of the Divine Redemption, and be ever grateful for the blessings it has brought to mankind.

II. Through sin, man's mind, originally endowed with

the faculty of a clear and ready perception of truth, received the wound of ignorance. Truth became obscured, and the mind became liable to doubt, uncertainty, error, and ignorance. Through sin, man's will, originally turned to what was good, and loving only rectitude, received the wound of malice. His will was perverted, and man was turned to desire what is evil and hurtful. His moral strength was impaired by the wound of weakness. He came to shirk effort and labour, and to lose the spirit of eagerness in the pursuit of virtue. Morally weak, he became a victim to evil inclinations and to the power of his spiritual enemies, and he easily failed to accomplish what duty requires. Finally, concupiscence turned man aside from God, to seek satisfactions contrary to the dictates of religion and of right reason, and his desires became irregular and inordinate. Lawful pleasures, and the enjoyment of the legitimate good that falls under the senses, no longer contented him, and he perversely desired satisfactions that are hurtful and forbidden. Sin caused these wounds and perversions, and also in addition brought upon man and his posterity bodily and mental defects, diseases, and disorders, with many miseries, and death. How great an evil is sin!

Devout Christian, your own personal sins bring upon you the sad consequences of guilt and punishment, and they add to the seriousness of the wounds inflicted upon our nature by man's fall. With so painful a picture of the effects of sin before you, be inspired with a sincere and lasting hatred of so great an evil, and be determined to use every effort to avoid sin, and to do penance for your past falls.

III. If our Lord had not become man's Redeemer, man's wounds would never have been healed, and man would have been poor, miserable, and desperate on earth, to pass away into a condition of eternal death. Everlasting thanks be to the Divine mercy, a remedy for his wounds was decreed. Our Lord was not deterred in His mission of compassion and mercy by the gravity of man's condition, nor by the terrible sufferings and death to be endured by

Himself in order to apply the remedy. Nor was He deterred by His foreknowledge of the base and continued ingratitude of countless multitudes of men for whom His atonement would be in vain. Christ became the 'Good Samaritan.' How loving were those sacred hands which bound up the wounds of our fallen humanity! How tender, too, was that sacred Heart which bore our sorrows and infirmities! (Isa. liii. 4). Our Lord brought to man a remedy for his ignorance, for his perversity, for his weakness, and for his evil concupiscence. Enlightened by Christ's holy teaching, strengthened by His grace, and clothed with His infinite merits, according to the measure of his many needs, man, risen from his fallen state, and restored to his lost dignity, was yet to reach his heavenly, everlasting home. Let not, then, the fallen sinner despair; for the Good Samaritan is at hand to staunch his wounds, and to lift him up. Blessed, then, for evermore be Christ, our loving and merciful Saviour!

Devout Christian, meditate with sorrow on man's perversity, and with gratitude and love on your Saviour's compassion. Alas! that many men reopen the wounds which His Divine hands have bound up! Walk circumspectly, ever praying for Divine aid, lest you imitate their folly and perversity. Pray to Mary, the Mother of our Redeemer, to obtain through her intercession a remedy for your past sins, and a strengthening of your soul in all good purposes.

September 6.

THE PERVERSITY OF SINNERS.

I. It is sad to record that, in many instances, we witness a display of greater interest and more assiduous effort in the pursuit of gains of the temporal order than in that of gains of the heavenly order. And, furthermore, we see some sinners more eager and persistent in their evil purposes than are some of the just in the service of God, although in the one case there is a penalty of eternal death, and in the other a reward of eternal life. It is lamentable that such persistence in a bad cause should be displayed by sinners. We are compelled to condemn their conduct, because they do not seek to please God, and they turn aside from the Sovereign Good. No reason can validly be brought forward to condone this consummate folly. Solomon, in the inspired Word, says that the whole business and duty of man is to 'fear God, and keep His commandments' (Eccles. xii. 13). This service of God is the condition of our attaining to His kingdom and enjoying Him eternally. This is the end for which we have been created. In vain have we received our being, if we do not know and serve God (Wisd. xiii. 1). For this end have we been raised above everything in this earthly creation to which we belong, and gifted with our reason and will. The wicked are to be condemned for their conduct, because they perversely and vainly seek their happiness out of God, making other ends the object of their life. Man has moral responsibilities. We cannot find, out of God, any being or any rule or authority which we feel rightly claims our worship and service; but we know that God's claims to these is paramount. Conscience tells us that we do a moral wrong when we neglect to render to God this worship and service, and when we break His law. The sinner stands condemned, because he does this moral wrong, and thereby incurs woeful consequences.

Devout Christian, the more you study the sinner's conduct, the more does his perversity force itself upon your conviction. May your own good purposes be so confirmed that you may be able to say to God with David: 'I am a partaker with all them that fear Thee, and that keep Thy commandments' (Ps. cxviii. 63).

II. The wicked do not seek light from God to guide them in their conduct. Our Lord said: 'Everyone that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved. But he that doth truth, cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, because they are done in God' (St. John iii. 20, 21). The works of the sinner are not done in the light of justice, and by the rule of God's holy law. A dark cloud obscures the sinner's reason, and he is led by his evil passions. If he takes these for his counsellors, such perversity cannot but lead to moral wrong; he will do what is contrary to right reason, and to God's commandments. St. Paul says: 'The wisdom of the flesh is an enemy to God' (Rom. viii. 7). David says: 'They are cursed who decline from Thy commandments' (Ps. cxviii. 21). God has given us as guides our reason and His law; but sinners are led by their foolish caprices, and by inordinate affections and perverse inclinations. Under the guidance of these false counsellors, they act inconsiderately, imprudently, and passionately. God witnesses their aberrations, and often leaves them to their fate. He finally punishes them for their baseness, perversity, and folly. How different is the conduct of the just! These consult to know God's holy will, and the teaching of our Lord's holy Word. They put before themselves the prudent conduct of God's servants, and they wish at all times to follow the dictates of right reason and of religion. David said: 'By Thy commandments I have had understanding: therefore have I hated every way of iniquity. Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths' (Ps. cxviii. 104, 105). 'Salvation is far from sinners: because they have not sought Thy justifications' (*Ibid.* 155). Heavenly and saintly lessons are lost upon sinners, who blindly follow their evil inclinations.

Devout Christian, love the holy guidance of right reason enlightened by God's law and teaching. It will condemn all wrong conduct, and the neglect of God's worship and service. Pray to God in all your perplexities, and when base passions or worldly influences would seduce you from the right way and from your duty to God.

III. God must be against the wicked. Vain is their effort to triumph, and to attain to happiness, when God is against them. God has His own time when to bring their machinations to naught, and to come to the succour of His servants. Through the lying statements of wicked men, the just and virtuous Susanna had been condemned to death, when she prayed, 'And the Lord heard her voice' (Dan. xiii. 44), and raised up Daniel to deliver her. God has His own time when to punish men who despise Him. Nearly forty years were given to Jerusalem wherein to repent of putting our Saviour to death; then came the punishments which our Lord had foretold. In vain, then, do the wicked promise themselves escape from the punishment of their perversity. St. Paul says: 'Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?' (1 Cor. i. 20). David says: 'When they were lifted up Thou hast cast them down. How are they brought to desolation! they have suddenly ceased to be: they have perished by reason of their iniquity' (Ps. lxxii. 18, 19). The wicked promise themselves gain as the fruit of conduct which is perverse, but in the end their consummate folly is made manifest. God must vindicate the justice and the authority of His law. It is written: 'There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord' (Prov. xxi. 30). What gain, then, shall the wicked expect, when they set God against them by their perversity? How vainly do they expect to escape from the punishments which they bring upon themselves! Oh, that they would enter into themselves while yet there is time! Their way of escape from God's wrath can only be by sincere conversion and by amendment of life. Why do they foolishly delay to seek this way?

Devout Christian, ever carefully avoid every path of

perversity. It may be the path of the many, but it is not the path of the wise. Ever love God's holy will, submit dutifully to His appointments, observe His commandments, and study the ways of virtue and piety. Against those who do these things 'there is no law' (Gal. v. 23). Pray that sinners may see their perversity and its woeful consequences, and be thereupon converted. Beseech Mary, the lover of the just, to obtain for you a sincere and constant love of all that appertains to God's service, that you may ever tend to the end for which God created you.

September 7.

INORDINATE AFFECTIONS.

I. It is sad to see in how many men there is an undutifulness in affection towards God, owing to the place in their hearts given to creatures. The wise man says: 'The creatures of God are turned to an abomination, and a temptation to the souls of men, and a snare to the feet of the unwise' (Wis. xiv. 11). In the use of creatures the perfection of wisdom is to use them according to the designs for which God has given them; that is, for the ends, and in the manner and measure, determined by God's will and providence. This principle should be applied in every order and state of life to the use of every kind and class of creature, and in the exercise of every power, faculty, and talent. If all men acted faithfully up to this principle, God would be honoured in the use of creatures, due order would be maintained, and there would be an end to abuses and to irregularities. But, unfortunately,

men love the creatures of God inordinately; they take inordinate complacence in them, and they seek their satisfaction in the riches, comforts, pleasures, and honours of the world, to the neglect of their love of God and of their duty towards Him. Men even become stumbling-blocks to one another, or they spend their lives in pursuing worldly gain, violating in various ways the holy commandments of God, and neglecting the duties of religion.

Devout Christian, be wise in bestowing your affections, and be careful how you follow their bent; be wise, too, in your use of the blessings of life, and in your employment of your talents. Let God be ever before you in all your affections and pursuits, and beg of Him ever to purify and direct your heart, that you may always love what He loves, and that you may ever will only what He wills.

II. The danger and the evil of inordinate affections are seen in their influence over men's mind, heart, and conduct. When men seek inordinate satisfaction in creatures, and in temporal goods, their affections are so far tied to the earth as to impede the wings of their desires from soaring upwards to God. Under these circumstances the light of right reason becomes to some extent obscured, so that wrong views, and unwise or unjust prejudices, are formed and followed. Everything is seen in the light that favours the inordinate affection; for this affection becomes as a ruling passion that causes a warping of the mind. It moreover demands for itself constant thought and consideration; and thus it diverts the mind not only from better things, but even from various ordinary duties. When this affection is positively evil, it corrupts the mind, and leads it to entertain false and dangerous views. Not only do inordinate affections lead to error in the mind, but they also divert the heart from God, and they cause a lessening of devotion. Conscience may then become uneasy and finally callous. St. Paul tells us that when unbelievers followed 'the desires of their heart,' they 'changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped, and served the creature rather than the Creator' (Rom. i. 25). Inordinate affections lead in the same direction.

Devout Christian, be not unfaithful to God, your Sovereign Good. Love your neighbour wisely according to the Divine law, and love earthly goods only as God would have you love them. All these shall pass away, but God abides for ever. Pray that your mind and heart may not be corrupted by any passing pleasures or gains, but may be ever true to God.

III. When men yield to inordinate affections, they are drawn in the direction those affections desire. Their conduct falls under the influence of these affections, and they make unlawful concessions to them. In doing so they frame various inadmissible excuses; there follow imprudences and aberrations in conduct. Under the influence of inordinate affection, for the sake of the creature, for some worldly gain, or for some unworthy satisfaction, men are carried along to offend the Divine Creator; the commandments are broken, duty is neglected, and scandal is given. When men come to fall so far under the influence of any inordinate affection, they seem not to realize the evil of it, and they make no earnest effort to escape from its bondage; they even seek to gratify it, and thus it obtains a stronger hold upon them. Only grace can turn their heart and release them from this bondage, and only when they are free from it will true joy return to their distracted mind and conscience. Let all Christians love the creatures of God wisely and according to God's will; let them dutifully put the love of God above every earthly love.

Devout Christian, let not your heart fall under the bondage of any inordinate affections. Holy David addressed himself to God, saying: 'Let all that seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee' (Ps. lxix. 5); he teaches you that your true joy is to be found in God. Consecrate your innocent affections, pleasures, and satisfactions to God, and your soul will not suffer any loss of peace. Give ever the first place in your heart to God. Pray to Mary to be your guide and guardian amidst the dangerous attractions that surround you, and to obtain for you a spirit of discretion in all your attachments, and in your pursuit of worldly advantages.

September 8.

MARY'S NATIVITY—I.

I. THE cold, bleak winter of expectation, during the several thousand years which elapsed before God's promise of a Redeemer was fulfilled, at length came to an end. Mary's birth opened a new era. We read with joy and devotion the prophecies of Holy Scripture: 'There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root' (Isa. xi. 1); 'Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad. . . . Then shall all the trees of the woods rejoice before the face of the Lord, because He cometh' (Ps. xcv. 11-13). We apply to the new era the words of the Canticles: 'The winter is now past. . . . The flowers have appeared in our land' (Cant. ii. 11, 12). After Jesus, Mary was the most beautiful flower that ever blossomed on earth. During the long years of expectation men were prepared gradually for the new era. By degrees only was unfolded to them the mystery of the Divine Incarnation. At first they were told that there should be a Saviour, Who should crush the serpent's head, and undo the evil the devil had brought about; then they were told of what family the Messias should be, God saying to Abraham: 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed' (Gen. xxii. 18); and later on, the prophets foretold various particulars of our Saviour's mission and sufferings, and the glories of His Church. These centuries of preparation were as the winter; their dreariness was, however, cheered by hope. True believers held the Divine promises, and they were comforted in looking forward with confidence to their fulfilment.

Devout Christian, thank God that your creation was reserved till now, when 'the flowers have appeared in our land.' You know Jesus and Mary, not only as foretold in

prophecy, but as they were when actually on earth; and you enjoy the richer blessings of the new era of realization and of grace.

II. We see under the Old Dispensation several prefigurements of Mary. Consider only Eve, Judith, and Esther. Eve was the mother of all the living; Mary was to be the spiritual Mother of all Christ's true followers. How much these two mothers differed! Eve fell from grace, and brought man into sin, causing sorrow and disgrace to her children; whereas Mary never fell from grace, and she does not cease to obtain many graces for her children, to whom she brings peace and joy. We lovingly style Mary 'Mother of Divine grace' and 'Cause of our joy.' Judith saved her people by slaying Holofernes; Mary, coming in her sinlessness and divinely given power, overthrew Satan, and through her Son she rescued her race from spiritual destruction. She continues her conquests by her unceasing intercession for those who invoke her aid. Esther pleaded with King Assuerus to avert from her people persecution and death, and her prayer was heard; Mary pleads with her Divine Son for the Church and for all her children, and she rescues them in time of persecution, danger, and temptation. Prefigurements only imperfectly represent and foreshadow the realities that are to come, but they are not to be compared with the realities; so Eve, Judith, and Esther, are not to be compared in personal excellence, or in the glory of their achievements, with Mary, whose perfection surpasses that of every other creature. Let Holy Church, then, rejoice when she commemorates Mary's birth; and let her children call to mind with admiration, praise, and thanksgiving the blessings God bestowed, and continues to bestow, upon mankind through Mary.

Devout Christian, you share in these blessings. Ever bless God from whom all precious gifts come, and do not forget the loving hands through which they are bestowed. Be ever devout to Mary; rejoice upon her festival days, and seek her intercession with confidence.

III. With what sentiments should Christians contem-

plate Mary's birth ? Let them, throughout the length and breadth of the Church, rejoice and manifest their joy and devotion in a holy festival. The Angel Gabriel told Zachary that many should rejoice in the birth of St. John the Baptist; should there not be even greater joy when there is question of the birth, not of our Lord's forerunner, but of His holy Mother ? The Church commemorates by special festivals only three nativities: these are the nativity of our Lord, the nativity of Mary, and the nativity of St. John the Baptist. We may say at Mary's birth that 'the winter is now past'; for she comes into the world spotless and beautiful who is to bring forth the spotless Lamb Who is to redeem the world. How sanctified, how precious in God's eyes, is Mary at her birth ! She is the child of two great Saints, St. Joachim and St. Anne; and she is blessed among all the daughters of Juda, and even among all the daughters of Eve. There has now budded the fairest and sweetest-scented flower that the earth has yet produced, which shall come to full and most perfect blossom, and shall never suffer injury, or fade, or perish. Hail, full of grace ! Hail, most beloved Daughter of the Most High ! Sublime is thy calling and glorious is thy destiny. This world of sin and misery is not worthy to be thy dwelling-place. Let the Most High overshadow thee, and may the graces of a most special providence be lavished upon thee !

Devout Christian, let the contemplation of Mary's nativity inspire you with sentiments of joy and of devotion. Beg of Mary to accept you as a loving client and child, and ask her to obtain for you a lively faith in the mystery of the Redemption and the grace of a true devotion to herself. Beseech her to preserve you from the dangers of the world and from all evil.

September 9.

MARY'S NATIVITY—II.

I. In God's eternal mind, as we may express ourselves, and from eternity, Mary was bound up indispensably and inseparably with the Divine mystery of the Incarnation. By God's eternal decree she was to be the Mother of the Divine Son made man. How incomparable, then, were Mary's calling and destiny! Holy Church applies to our Lord Solomon's praises of Wisdom, and these praises in their figurativeness may comprehend also allusion to Mary's existence in the Divine Mind, which is represented as preparing all things for the coming and reign of Jesus Christ. Solomon says of Wisdom: 'The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made. The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived' (Prov. viii. 22-24). How beautiful, in the Eternal Mind, was Mary! She was to be conceived immaculate, and there would be nothing wanting in the gifts and adornments that should raise her above every other creature, and fit her for her sublime dignity and destiny. When in the fulness of time the mystery of the Incarnation was about to be accomplished, Mary was born. Let all the creatures of God praise Him for His work in Mary; let all men admire the wisdom and bounty of His providence displayed in the excellence which He has bestowed upon her in her creation.

Devout Christian, recognize that in praising Mary you render glory to God, Who made her what she is, and Who lavished His gifts upon her; and that in loving Mary you please God, Who loved her first, and Who has decreed that all generations shall bless her (St. Luke i. 30, 48).

II. We have reflected upon Mary's holiness in her birth.

To her we refer Solomon's words, when he says in the name of the heavenly Spouse: 'As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters' (Cant. ii. 2). Mary advanced in holiness, reaching finally the perfection to which God called her. How different is the case with most men! In view of our high destiny—for we are called to be the adopted children of God—God loves us, and He has provided for us every necessary grace and suitable gift. Through the sin of our first parents we, indeed, came into the world stained with sin, deprived of every spiritual gift, and needing redemption and grace; but soon the saving waters of Baptism were poured upon us, and we became children of grace. Although we were then adopted by God as His children, and made citizens of His kingdom in this world, and heirs of His kingdom that is to come, we were yet exposed to various temptations and to the assaults of Satan. Did we remain faithful to grace? Perhaps when we attained the use of reason we soon lost our baptismal innocence, and perhaps, too, later in life we remained for long periods in the bondage of sin. Christians, to whom such things have happened, should lament their miserable and unworthy conduct. Did God expect such a return for all His bounties and mercies?

Devout Christian, while admiring Mary in her spotlessness and grace at her birth, and while rejoicing in her faithfulness to grace, reflect upon what has been your own conduct. Detest any unfaithfulness and relapse into sin that there may have been in your case, and pray that you may never fall away again.

III. O happy nativity of Mary! Mary comes into the world to be this earth's fairest adornment, and to build up the superb edifice of her sanctification. Special graces are continually poured out upon her. When the friends of Zachary and Elizabeth heard of the wonders that attended the birth of St. John the Baptist, they exclaimed: 'What an one, think ye, shall this child be?' (St. Luke i. 66). Such a thought comes also to the minds of Christians when they contemplate Mary's birth. We may say of Mary what is written of Jesus, that she 'advanced in wisdom,

and age, and grace with God and men.' She became ever more pleasing to God. David says: ' God is wonderful in His saints: the God of Israel is He who will give power and strength to His people " (Ps. lxvii. 36). Above all is God wonderful in His works in the sacred humanity of His Son, and next in His operations in Mary; and to her has He given beauty, power, excellence, wisdom, and sanctity. May God be for ever blessed for the magnificence and copiousness of His gifts to Mary !

Devout Christian, venerate Mary in her birth. Learn from her to value God's grace, and to be faithful in preserving it and in corresponding with the many graces that come to you from God's bounty. Many of them are the fruits of Mary's prayers. Beg of your heavenly Mother to obtain for you grace to live becomingly as an adopted child of God, and to recognize the effort so to live as a matter of daily and constant duty.

September 10.

MARY'S NATIVITY—III.

I. MARY came into the world as a special child of grace. At her coming the time of promise was about to expire, and the dispensation of fear to pass away; for the era of grace was about to set in. It was therefore a time for emerging from a long and dreary period of expectation, and for entertaining sentiments of gladness. Mary's birth is the dawn of the new era. O expectant sons of men, lift up your eyes to the mountains (Ps. cxx. 1); the Sun of Justice will soon appear; 'the desire of the everlasting hills' is about to come. A happy change is to be ushered in, to be felt by the true servants of God; for it is the dawn of a condition of peace to men of goodwill. Even the just under the Old Dispensation were for the most part strangers to the beautiful sentiments of devotion which fill the soul of a pious Christian under the New Law; for their minds had not the same sublime lessons to feed upon, or such noble examples to contemplate. The just in those days knew Jesus and Mary only in dim prophecy. As Jesus and Mary were inseparable in the Divine Mind contemplating the mystery of the Incarnation, so are they inseparable in the Christian mind relishing with pious sentiments the fruits this mystery has brought to men. After Mary's coming richer sources of grace were to be opened to men. The prophecy is to be fulfilled: 'You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains' (Isa. xii. 3).

Devout Christian, rejoice in the great event which Mary's birth was to usher in, as you now enjoy the happy results of that event. Contemplate with admiration and gratitude the Divine dispensations bringing grace and salvation to men. Say with the prophet: 'Behold, God is my Saviour, I will deal confidently, and will not fear: because the Lord

is my strength, and my praise, and He is become my salvation ' (Isa. xii. 2).

II. Consider how perfectly grace held sway over Mary and triumphed in this special child of grace. What do we see in her immaculate conception ? in her pure virginal maternity ? in the continual and ever-increasing holiness of her life ? We see in them the magnificent operations, sway, and triumph of grace. Did not Mary crush the serpent's head (Gen. iii. 15) ? Satan, who had brought, and who still brings, to ruin so many of the children of men, was baffled in presence of Mary: ' She shall crush thy head '; and not only was he baffled, but he was rendered powerless, and compelled to render tribute to Mary's holiness and power: ' thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.' How secret and how successful was the process by which Mary was prepared for her sublime dignity of Mother of the Divine Son ! It was written: ' The wilderness shall rejoice and shall flourish like the lily . . . they shall see the glory of the Lord and the beauty of our God ' (Isa. xxxv. 1, 2); but this did not come to pass until the ineffable operations of grace had fitted Mary for her part in the mystery. Men, Mary herself, and all the Saints, were to receive every grace through Jesus Christ, but He was to be given to us through Mary. Grace triumphed in effecting Mary's preparation for this incomparable office. Joined to this office of giving us our Divine Saviour is her advocacy for men. She was to be the medium through which countless graces and mercies should be bestowed upon men. Saints and sinners in every age of the Church's existence should seek Mary's aid, and not in vain. Grace prepared Mary also for this merciful and loving office in our regard.

Devout Christian, let the commemoration of Mary's birth remind you of God's operations in Mary, ever perfecting His chosen daughter. And while admiring the triumphs of grace in her, rejoice also in the fruits of grace and virtue, and of repentance, which have resulted from her intercession.

III. Let us now turn from this beautiful picture of the

triumphs of grace in Mary, and in men through Mary's intercession, to ask how far grace holds sway in the lives of the generality of Christians. There are happily in every land pious Christians who value God's service above every other; for the Church must ever bear the mark of holiness, not alone in the inalienable character which its Divine Founder has given it (Eph. v. 27), but also in the holy character of its works and of its members. While we rejoice that this is so, we have yet to lament the conduct of many of the children of the Church whose lives render them unworthy of their Christian calling. For, although grace is a Divine and most precious and necessary gift in the supernatural order, bestowed to make us pleasing to God, to adorn our souls, and to give us title to eternal life, yet many men neglect grace and set higher value on gifts in the natural order; other men abuse grace, turning to little or no account the spiritual blessings they receive; and other men again become a cause of scandal to their neighbour, and are at times the cause of his losing grace. All this is lamentable.

Devout Christian, pray that you may never fall from grace, and be careful to avoid the evil influences that might cause such a fall. This will not be enough to do; you must also have recourse to the means through which grace may be acquired. Cultivate piety, receive the Holy Sacraments. Finally, have constant recourse to Mary's intercession. Pray to her now for the grace to be preserved from the evil of sin, for the grace ever to love her Divine Son, and for the favour of being ever numbered among her devout children.

September 11.

HOLY NAME OF MARY—I.

I. St. Luke tells us: 'The Virgin's name was Mary' (St. Luke, i. 27). This holy name has ever been venerated by all true Christians. It reminds us of the Virgin Mother of Christ who bore it. After the adorable Name of Jesus no name is so dear to us as that of Mary. Of the Name of Jesus, which signifies Saviour, it is written: 'Thy Name is as oil poured out' (Cant. i. 2). O beautiful Name! emitting the sweet odour of Divine attractions, soothing as a balm our afflicted souls, healing the serpent's bite, lighting up our minds with heavenly teaching, strengthening us for the combat, preserving us from the rust of sin, and causing our souls to shine with the lustre of Christian virtues! No name can compare with this adorable Name of Jesus. The name of Mary comes next in the order of illustrious and potent names. This sweet name signifies 'Star of the Sea,' also 'Bitter Sea' and 'Lady' (St. Jerome, St. Peter Chrysologus, St. Bernard). It reminds us of our ever-blessed Mother. It brings up to our minds sweet and precious memories of the past; it speaks to us of Mary in Heaven; it carries our thoughts on to the future. We will ever bless a name so dear to Jesus, to St. Joseph, to the holy Apostles, to all the Angels and Saints, and to all true disciples of our Divine Saviour.

Devout Christian, love and venerate this holy name of Mary Immaculate, of Mary the ever spotless Virgin, of Mary the Mother of Jesus. Ever pronounce it with respect and affection. Blessed be the name of Mary.

II. When the holy name of Mary sounds in our ears there rises before the eye of our mind the dignified, honoured, sweet, and gentle person of Mary whom the name represents. It tells us of all we have read and heard of Mary.

Her whole history is recalled by the very sound of her august name. Mary is at once before us, the humble maiden of Nazareth, the object of Gabriel's visit at the annunciation, the subject of the praises of Gabriel and Elizabeth, and the Virgin Mother of our Saviour at Bethlehem. When we hear her name there comes before us Mary in all her sacred relations with Jesus throughout His life, Mary in Egypt, Mary in the hidden seclusion at Nazareth, and Mary in various episodes narrated by the Evangelists. Her name recalls not only the young and beautiful virginal Mother, all full of gentleness and sweetness, but also Mary the mature woman, still full of grace, but also laden with sorrow, as she was during the Passion of Jesus, and even desolate as she was on Calvary. It recalls also Mary comforting the Apostles and awaiting the time of her holy death and glorious assumption. A name so bound up in history with that of Jesus and entering so essentially into the history of man's redemption, should be ever cherished by all men.

Devout Christian, let the holy name of Mary help to keep alive your faith in Jesus and in His beneficent mission to save the world. Let it comfort and delight you to recall what you know of Mary's life, sayings, and works, and of her eminent virtues.

III. The name of Mary directs our thoughts to Mary as she is at present, and to all she is now to us, and to the future, when, as we hope, we shall see her and enjoy her society in the eternal blessedness of Heaven. When we pronounce the holy name of Mary, or hear it mentioned, our thoughts are lifted up to Heaven where Mary is, and we recognize in her our heavenly Mother and Protectress. We recognize the power of her intercession, her tenderness for her spiritual children, and the blessings resulting from her advocacy, and we are comforted by the thought of her patronage. We feel that we are not orphans, for God is above all our Father, and next to Him comes Mary as our loving Mother. Finally, the sound of the name of Mary comes to fill us with hope. If we love Mary now, we are confident that it will be granted to us to love her hereafter.

We wander on in our thoughts to the bright horizon of life, and to the expectation of seeing Mary in her triumphant state, so magnificent, so beautiful, so gracious; and it comforts us even now, with a foretaste of joy in the very thought, that we shall spend our eternity in the society and love of our heavenly Mother.

Devout Christian, let the name of Mary be dear to your heart, lips, and ears. Cherish this holy name, and it will be a source of consolation and of grace. Look up ever to Mary as to the bright star shining over the dark ocean of this life of cares, dangers, and storms. Beg of Mary to be your Protectress, and promise her that you will ever regard her as your sweet Lady and Mother.

September 12.

HOLY NAME OF MARY—II.

I. The holy name of Mary is honoured in Heaven. It is first of all dear to Jesus, and what is cherished by Him must also be cherished by all the Angels, and by all the Elect in Heaven. It is written: 'Honour thy father and thy mother.' Our Lord assumed our humanity that He might give glory to His Father, and He ever fulfilled the will of His Father. He Himself declared: 'I honour My Father' (St. John viii. 49). He will ever honour His Father in Heaven. Our Lord ever honoured His Mother while on earth, and He will ever do so in Heaven; her name is dearer to Him than all other names among His creatures. The Angels ever honour the name of their Queen. With intuitive knowledge they know who and what Mary is, and all her greatness and excellence. They see her place in the Divine designs, her relations with the Most Holy Trinity, her exalted dignity, her high prerogatives, her beauty, and her glory; and full of admiration and love they honour and praise her holy name. The Saints, too, share in this knowledge, and they now know all that Mary did for them while they were on earth. They, too, make Mary and her holy name the theme of their praise, and ever honour the name of Mary. The name of the Mother of the heavenly King who is the joy of all Saints will ever be loved and revered in the heavenly kingdom.

Devout Christian, rejoice in the honour rendered in Heaven to the name of one so dear to you. Rejoice in the sweet consolation it affords Mary to be so much loved by Jesus, and so much revered by all the Angels and Saints.

II. Because of Mary's relation to Jesus, and because of her triumph over Satan, her holy name is feared by the demons. It is to them a cause of terror and dread. Mary

is the mighty conqueror who through her Son crushed the head of the serpent, and whom men call to their aid against the Evil One in the day of battle. She, by the power bestowed by God upon her, drives Satan away, or gives her clients victory over him. We read of King Saul, when God had abandoned him, that an evil spirit possessed him, and that, when this evil spirit tormented him, he found no remedy or relief save through the sweet music of David's harp. The Bible says that 'David took his harp and played with his hand, and Saul was refreshed and was better, for the evil spirit departed from him' (1 Kings xvi. 23). The sweet sound of Mary's name strikes the tempting demons with terror, and drives them away. St. Bernard therefore bids us call upon Mary in time of temptation; and addressing himself to her, he says: 'Thou art invincible in behalf of thy servants, fighting against the wicked spirits who assault us.' St. Alphonsus says to Mary: 'Since you are so terrible to the devil, you can deliver us from all his snares.' The trustful invocation of the name of Mary will be a source of heavenly protection to us against the assaults of Satan.

Devout Christian, fail not to have recourse to Mary when you experience the secret and insidious temptations of your arch-enemy. Do not parley with him, do not delay to turn away from him; but have immediate recourse to prayer, and invoke Mary's powerful protection.

III. The sweet name of Mary affords consolation to the Church on earth. Both just and sinners are comforted by it. It comforts the just to be reminded, by this holy name, of their heavenly Mother, protectress, and advocate. They do not feel alone, weak, and uncared-for while they have Mary in their minds and her name upon their lips. They learn from the Saints to revere Mary's holy name, and with loving and joyful devotion to invoke it and to bless it. To sinners, too, this cherished name brings the comfort of hope. They remember that she is the 'Refuge of sinners.' They are confident that, when in sorrow for their sins they run to Mary and invoke her holy name, she will plead with her merciful Divine Son for them. St. Bernard bids

sinners who are disturbed and alarmed by the enormity of their crimes, and even on the very brink of despair, to turn their thoughts to Mary. How assuring are the invitations and exhortations expressed in his writings in so many ways ! The holy name of Mary is a name of power, and one affording consolation, one ever to be blessed and invocated. Mary will not turn a deaf ear to her clients who call upon her with love and confidence.

Devout Christian, you will need Mary's help during your whole life, now and at the hour of your death. Cherish her holy name, and call upon it every day. Strive according to your circumstances and opportunities to bring others to do the same. Offer yourself once more to Mary to be always her devoted child, and beg of her to obtain for you grace to avoid the paths of worldliness and sin, and to love those of virtue and piety.

September 13.

THE HEALING OF THE DEAF AND DUMB.

I. The physical infirmities healed by our Lord were figures of the soul's moral infirmities. There are men who are spiritually blind, spiritually deaf and dumb, and even spiritually dead. We must not think that, when our Lord gave healing to bodily infirmities, He confined His compassionate action to such healing only. He did more. He at the same time conferred some spiritual benefit; He imparted the gift of a more perfect faith, or forgiveness for sin, or attraction to piety. In all things He sought the glory of His Heavenly Father, and man's everlasting welfare. The deaf and dumb man whom our Lord healed represented the sinner who is spiritually deaf and dumb. The man bent on committing sin closes his ear to God's warnings; and when he has sinned, he is deaf to God's reproaches, and to His calls to repentance. He is deaf to the lessons conveyed by the preaching of God's minister, or by the sight of the holy crucifix, or by the remembrances inspired by his own dormant faith. He is also dumb because he no longer declares God's praises with becoming dispositions. He may even cease to pray. Yet the sinner should especially pray for God's forgiveness, and for the grace of true repentance; and he should confess his sins. The repentant David said: 'I will declare my iniquity' (Ps. xxxvii. 19). But the sinner is dumb, and if he pretends to pray, the perversity of his heart deprives his prayer of merit in God's sight. There are, alas! some sinners who speak, not prayers or profitable words, but sinful words, and they are, therefore, worse than dumb. Oh, if only sinners who are deaf and dumb, becoming conscious of their miserable condition, would turn their eyes to Jesus, and beseech Him to have compassion on them! His compassionate Heart would be responsive to their appeal, and He would heal them.

Devout Christian, let it be your joy to speak to God in fervent prayer, and be ever attentive to the inspirations of grace, and you will never fall into the miserable condition of those who are spiritually deaf and dumb.

II. When our Lord healed the deaf and dumb man, He led him aside, away from the multitude (St. Mark vii. 33), as though to teach us that sinners will not be truly converted if they do not quit the associations and other occasions which have led to their fall into sin, and then, when removed from them, seek reconciliation with the Most High. Such was the mode of procedure of the Prodigal Son. He said to himself: 'I will arise. I will quit this place and these surroundings, and I will go to my father.' We see in this a practical proof of conversion, and of desire of reconciliation. When removed from the occasions of sin, the sinner with profitable results enters into himself, and sees the folly and perversity of his ways. He proceeds to look into his conscience to see how deeply he has sinned. Moved to better desires, he detests his sins, and he is determined to amend and never to return to the base servitude of sin (St. John viii. 34). Then will God speak to him words of encouragement, inspiring hope of pardon and of eternal life, words of comfort and peace. Our Lord put His fingers into the ears of the deaf and dumb man, and then, spitting, touched his tongue to bring the needed remedy to the organs of hearing and speech. Touched by grace, the sinner, now on the way to conversion, hears the Divine warnings, and listens to the lessons conveyed by the great truths of religion, especially those relating to our Saviour's Passion, and to death, judgment, eternal reward, and eternal punishment. He hearkens also to God's merciful invitation to reconciliation, and to the call to amendment of life. Thus are the sinner's ears opened. His tongue is also loosed, for now he acknowledges his sinfulness, and the baseness, folly, and perversity of his conduct. The salt of heavenly wisdom which he received at Baptism is now tasted once more to correct his depraved inclinations, and to infuse into his heart a relish for what is more worthy and more profitable. Now is the sinner disposed to pray, and to speak what will be to edification.

Devout Christian, admire God's merciful dealings with sinners. Their conversion is the effect of the Divine commiseration. Pray for grace ever to listen to God's inspira-

tions, and to be guided in your conduct by the dictates of heavenly wisdom.

III. In healing the deaf and dumb man, we are told how our Lord finally looked up to Heaven, groaned, and said: 'Be thou opened.' The sinner, obedient now to the inspirations of grace, detesting his sins, and determined upon amendment of life, proceeds with sentiments of sincere sorrow to supplicate God for pardon. He looks up to Heaven with confidence in God's mercy, bewailing his own baseness, and the miserable condition to which his sins have reduced him. Not once only, but again and again does he give expression to his compunction, and plead to His Heavenly Father for forgiveness; he promises in future to obey the holy commandments of God and of His Church, and to avoid all the ways of evil. He confesses his sins in the holy Sacrament of Penance, and he is absolved. His healing is thus effected. His ears are opened, the string of his tongue is loosed, and he speaks right (St. Mark vii. 35). Received back once more into the arms of God's everlasting love, let the converted sinner return thanks to his Divine Benefactor, and let him give proof of his conversion by a newness of life. In the comfort of his restored peace, let him pray for heavenly favours, saying with David: 'Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and strengthen me with a perfect spirit' (Ps. l. 14). And let him redouble his efforts to please God, and to work out his salvation. Now is the converted sinner a trophy of God's loving and patient mercy. Alas! that it has to be said that many sinners, after their conversion, turn back to their perverse ways! St. Peter says: 'Their latter state is become unto them worse than the former' (2 St. Pet. ii. 20).

Devout Christian, rejoice ever in the love and friendship of God, and turn a deaf ear to every evil seduction that would draw you from the holy way of His service. Ever bless and praise God for all His mercies, and ever pray for a continuance of His aid and protection, lest you fall away from the path of holy living. Commend yourself with confidence to Mary's prayers, and beseech her to obtain for you constancy in heeding God's inspirations, and fervour in your devotions.

September 14.

RESISTING EVIL INCLINATIONS—I.

I. One of the greatest of the many penalties which have fallen upon men as a consequence of sin is the rebellious character of their inclinations. We must not follow these inclinations when they are evil. Grace is abundantly provided to enable us to control and restrain our evil propensities, and only through our own malice or neglect do we yield to them. God seems to say to the Christian beset with temptations from perverse nature what He said of old to His Prophet beset with enemies: 'They shall fight against thee, and shall not prevail: for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee' (Jer. i. 19). We must mortify ourselves, and curb all evil inclinations, if we would preserve our soul from sin. St. Paul teaches the necessity of Christian mortification where he says: 'They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences' (Gal. v. 24). Self-denial is the secret badge of adhesion to our Lord, for He has said: 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me' (St. Matt. xvi. 24).

Devout Christian, bear patiently with the evil promptings of fallen nature, but deal resolutely with them. It should not surprise you, nor should it alarm you, if you experience them; but be careful to battle strenuously against them. If you do not overcome them, they will overcome you.

II. There is no satisfactory conversion of sinners to God while they fail to battle against their evil inclinations, for what led them to sin, if not these inclinations? And while evil inclinations remain unrestrained, they will be like the wild beasts that lay waste the vineyards (Ps. lxxix. 14). God said of old to His rebellious people: 'Be converted to

Me with all your heart' (Joel ii. 12). Evil inclinations unrestrained keep sinners from God; they prevent God's many graces from having effect. For instance, sermons which move to repentance sinners who are prepared to do everything that sincere conversion demands fail to move effectually others who are unwilling to fight resolutely their unruly passions. If these others even take the first steps to conversion, but do not complete it by this resolute combat, they rise from the pit of sin only to fall back into it again. This is the history of many relapses into sin. Sinners are unwilling to strike at the root of the evil. They wish for a comfortable conversion, entailing no radical change of heart and determined struggle; but such a conversion is not true, and it will not be lasting.

Devout Christian, watch assiduously against the uprising of evil passions, and deal resolutely with evil propensities; for these things will corrupt your heart, and turn it away from your Sovereign and only Good. Say with David: 'Shall not my soul be subject to God? for from Him is my salvation' (Ps. lxi. 2).

III. The love we owe God demands that we should ever struggle against our evil propensities, for they lead us to offend Him. Our Lord requires His followers to be humble, meek, just, charitable, pure, and temperate. How will they be so, if they do not restrain their passions? if they do not strive to overcome pride, anger, covetousness, hatred, impurity, and intemperance? To be virtuous, we must love God, and avoid evil. It is not enough to hear Mass, to observe the days of abstinence, and to give alms, if at the same time we leave our evil passions unbridled. We must ever battle against them, if we would be pleasing to God. These passions, if not curbed, will deprive us of true peace. God told the Israelites that they should utterly destroy the Chanaanites, who were His enemies and theirs; otherwise He said: 'They that remain shall be unto you as nails in your eyes, and spears in your sides, and they shall be your adversaries in the land of your habitation' (Num. xxxiii. 55). Thus, too, will it be with men who do not fight resolutely with their evil propen-

sities; for how can they expect to enjoy interior peace while their mind and heart are disturbed by wicked thoughts, desires, and promptings? There will not be true peace while we do not check our inordinate affections, and while we do not restrain evil inclinations; nor will half-measures in our dealing with them prove satisfactory to our well-being. We must be courageous and determined, and we must use prayer, mortification, and the Holy Sacraments; then will our Lord 'command the winds and the sea,' and calm and peace will be restored.

Devout Christian, seek ever to satisfy God's demands upon your faithful service, and love the ways of virtue. Commend yourself to Mary's care, with the fervent desire of being ever virtuous in sentiment and conduct, and beg through her prayers the grace to battle successfully against all evil inclinations.

September 15.

RESISTING EVIL INCLINATIONS—II.

I. In our warfare with our evil inclinations we must follow certain rules if we would be successful. Who would not rejoice in being free from the molestation caused by evil passions? This molestation is, however, a condition of our present existence, and to the just it is a severe but profitable trial. It is permitted in order to try their virtue, which should even be strengthened and rendered robust by the trial. In our warfare with evil propensities, the first advice that may be given is to offer immediate resistance. As soon as we become aware of our being drawn to do wrong, and as soon as we feel the uprising of any wicked passion within us, we should at once be determined not to yield, and we should endeavour to restrain and curb ourselves. This determination and this effort should be accompanied by prompt and earnest prayer for God's grace. When men allow the evil inclination or passion to gain ground, it becomes stronger; and the longer they delay to offer resistance, the more formidable it will become, and the harder to be overcome. This is especially the case with anger and impurity.

Devout Christian, use your weapons of attack and defence upon your first sighting your enemy, and you will thereby gain the first advantage. Thus was it that the Saints obtained their victories.

II. Another advice in the warfare with evil inclinations is to cultivate the virtues opposed to them. Thus, men subject to anger should direct their serious effort to acquire meekness. They should do this by praying for that virtue, and by trying to be gentle in speech and manner. Men inclined to impurity should desire to cultivate chastity. For this end they should practise devotion to the Sacred

Heart of Jesus, and to the Blessed Virgin. They should receive Holy Communion frequently, and they should practise mortification and the custody of the eyes. The cultivation of the required virtues should go on, even when the assaults of evil passions are not felt or are less frequent. When we perceive exactly what our evil propensities are, and especially what is our predominant weakness, we should labour seriously to protect ourselves against them, and to strengthen the weak points of our fortifications. This will be done between the assaults, as well as during the time of the actual assault. Our position will thus become stronger, we shall become more confident, and our enemy's chance of victory will be lessened.

Devout Christian, let these reflections convince you of the necessity of ever cultivating virtue, and particularly the virtue opposed to your predominant passion. The stronger you become in that virtue, the more formidable you will be to your spiritual enemies, and the surer will be your successful resistance of their assaults.

III. The third advice recommended in warring against our evil inclinations is to give special attention first to the one which is our chief obstacle to perfection, and then to fight the others in order; but in both the one case and the other to persevere in our efforts, and not to be daunted by the obstinacy or importunity of our enemy. Trying as may be this warfare, it is yet glorious, seeing that on our part we are fighting to please God, and to save our soul from peril. Our Lord has said: 'Because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold. But he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved' (St. Matt. xxiv. 12, 13). Victory will be for the valiant soldier, who fights on till he gains it. We should feel courage in this warfare with evil inclinations by the thought that thereby we become more pleasing to God, Who ever witnesses the conflict and lends aid; that as we persevere in the fight the labour will become less arduous; that our efforts will insure for us peace of conscience; and that they will be finally recompensed with a heavenly reward. To desist in the conflict would be followed by many falls into

sin, and would expose our soul to serious danger of being lost.

Devout Christian, be determined not to lay down your arms on the field of battle until the victory is yours. Do not complain if the struggle is long; it was long in the case of many Saints. The warfare will not be without its consolations. When all is quiet, and there is no struggle, a fatal apathy may cause the soul to be less watchful and less faithful in virtue and piety. Ask Mary, your heavenly Patroness, to obtain for you wisdom, patience, and constancy in your warfare with your besetting weakness and with every evil propensity.

September 16.

MARY'S SORROWS—I.

I. Our Lord had His humiliations and sufferings, for the Divine decrees and the prophecies had to be fulfilled. He came to be the victim for sin. Mary came to be herself without sin, and to crush the serpent's head. In her case, too, there should be suffering, for so it had been decreed. Perhaps this surprises us, for we understand that we, as sinners, should suffer the penalties attached to our sins; but, we ask, why should spotless Mary suffer? God ordained that Mary should suffer on account of her Son, and in union with Him, so that thus her sufferings should be wholly sanctified, and should give Him special honour. Mary's sufferings are worthy to be commemorated, and they convey many lessons. The cruel Passion of our Lord and the sorrows of Mary tell us of what sin must be in itself. We know its wide devastation, its almost universal empire, and the miseries it causes; but how shall we learn its malice? To learn this, we must study the mystery of man's redemption, which involved the sufferings and death of the Immaculate Lamb of God and the sorrows of Mary.

Devout Christian, learn by Mary's example to embrace all God's dispensations. Will you be satisfied to see Jesus and Mary suffer, and to be yourself without any suffering? Learn, too, how great the evil of sin must be. Every fresh consideration that convinces you of the malice of sin should help to deter you from falling into sin.

II. If every disciple of Christ must take up his cross and follow our Lord, Mary must lead the way; for she is the Mother of the 'Man of Sorrows' (Isa. liii. 3), and of all men who must pass through the school of earthly woes. We have read of the noble and courageous mother of the seven Machabees (2 Mach. vii.), who witnessed their cruel

martyrdom, and who was then put to death herself, and we admire the lesson she teaches of religious and heroic self-sacrifice. Mary surpassed this true mother in the magnitude of her suffering by reason of her exceeding love of Jesus, and of the excess of His sacred sufferings; and although we especially commemorate only seven sorrows, we know that there were many more, and that sorrow had an abiding-place in her loving heart (St. Luke ii. 51). Mary's suffering did not diminish as time went on, because day by day Jesus became dearer to her. So we may say that, unlike the Martyrs, who passed quickly through the ordeal of their martyrdom and won their crown, Mary's sufferings were lifelong. During the period that preceded the Resurrection she suffered because she knew her Son had to suffer and to die, and then during the sacred Passion by the part assigned to her. After the Resurrection she suffered by her lively recollection of all Jesus had endured.

Devout Christian, look up with admiration and loving sympathy to Mary, and unite your few sorrows to hers. See how true and constant her love of Jesus was! Do you not desire to have a part in this devotedness? Be ever devout to the sacred Passion of Jesus, and commemorate also with piety the sorrows of Mary.

III. We cannot doubt that God vouchsafed to Mary many interior consolations while, supported by grace, she bore her sorrows so bravely and so patiently; but we yet remember that a sword of suffering pierced her soul (St. Luke ii. 35), and that Jesus, Who might have consoled her, was Himself the cause of her sorrows. The climax of her suffering was on Calvary. When St. Stephen witnessed the fury of his persecutors, as they were about to rush upon him, he looked up steadfastly to Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God (Acts vii. 55). It was not thus with Mary on Calvary, for darkness covered the earth, and she saw Jesus in cruel torments hanging on the Cross. Any consolation she may have experienced did not take away from the full force of her many sorrows, but tended only to support her under them. No one was, however, so dear to God as Mary.

Let it not dishearten the just if they experience affliction, for God's dispensations in their regard often include bitter and long trials. They must resignedly leave to God the duration of the trials, and meanwhile accept with thankfulness any measure of consolation that may mitigate their severity.

Devout Christian, be assured that if God blessed Mary in so many ways, and exalted her above all other creatures, and yet apportioned to her the greatest measure of sorrow, He did this for the wisest of ends, and meant thereby to teach you many useful lessons. Pray to Mary, the 'Mother of Sorrows,' to obtain for you patience under your trials, and a loving submission to God's dispensations.

September 17.

MARY'S SORROWS—II.

I. The piety of Catholics marks out especially seven of Mary's sorrows to be commemorated and honoured. The first of these seven sorrows is met with on the fortieth day after our Lord's birth. Mary presented herself at the Temple for the ceremony of the purification, to offer her Child, and to release Him upon the offering of two doves. This promised to be a joyous event, and many extraordinary and consoling circumstances did actually attend it. But joined to the gratification which Mary experienced in presenting our Lord in the Temple was the sorrow which fell upon her, and pervaded her soul, when she heard holy Simeon declare in prophecy that the Divine Child was set for a sign which should be contradicted, and, moreover, that her own soul should be pierced by a sword. How shall she reconcile Simeon's prophecy concerning Jesus with the words of Gabriel: 'He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High. . . . And of His kingdom there shall be no end'? In this dolour Mary, by anticipation, experienced the sorrows that were yet to come. The dark cloud of her sorrows now overshadows her.

Devout Christian, let it not weigh on you when you are told that your life will be beset with trials. The earthly paradise has long passed away, and the penalties of sin are upon us. Learn from Mary in her first dolour to accept in silence and resignedly the afflictions God may send you.

II. Mary's second sorrow follows quickly on the first. Gabriel orders St. Joseph to proceed without delay to Egypt. The flight into Egypt exposes the Holy Family to much fatigue and to many hardships. The one great subject of satisfaction it affords is the saving of the life of the

Divine Child; but might not this have been effected in other ways—in ways unattended by hardship and exile? How trying it must have been to Mary to be compelled to take refuge in a stable! But now she is homeless, and Jesus is homeless, too. Jesus, carried by Mary and Joseph, becomes an exile. The flight takes place at night-time. Joseph is in charge, but he does not know the way. The resources of the Holy Family are scanty. There are perils on the way, and a strange land is to be its home. St. Joseph does not know how long he may be required to sojourn in Egypt—there is uncertainty about everything. We have yet to learn the history of that journey into Egypt, of the fatigues, privations, and dangers that were experienced during it, and of the severe trials of the seven years spent in Egypt. Mary shares St. Joseph's toils and anxieties. What are her feelings when she considers under what straitened circumstances she has to provide for the welfare of the Divine Child?

Devout Christian, compassionate your heavenly Mother, weighed down by the sorrow of this trial. If any similar trial should fall to your lot, imitate Mary in her patient, unmurmuring endurance.

III. When back at Nazareth after the years of exile, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph go up to Jerusalem every year at the time of the Pasch to offer in the Temple the prescribed worship. Upon the occasion of one of these visits to Jerusalem, when Jesus was now twelve years old, Mary experiences her third great sorrow—a sorrow of three days' duration. It was caused by the loss of our Lord. In the first two dolours Jesus had been with her, but now He is absent, and Mary does not know where He is. Jesus has not returned with her, and only on the evening of the first day's return journey does she discover that He is not in the company. There comes upon her a painful sense of loss and of loneliness, and anxiety, misgiving, unrest, fatigue, and disappointment add to its intensity as time goes by. The search for Jesus proceeds for three days, every hour bringing some fresh trial to increase her sorrow. Finally, on the third day the sorrow ceases, for Jesus is

found in Jerusalem discoursing with the doctors of the law in the Temple. Now is the only occasion on which Mary made known her feelings. She says: 'Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.' The three days of harrowing thoughts and of grief of heart are now happily over. Jesus is found, and He retires with Mary and Joseph to Nazareth for eighteen years of seclusion and of submission.

Devout Christian, look into Mary's heart as it beat with sorrow during the three days' loss, and learn with what earnestness, loyalty, and constancy you should love Jesus Christ. Have you ever been separated from Him by mortal sin? Oh, regret the folly and wickedness which drove Him from you. Pray to Mary to obtain for you that, by God's grace, you may be preserved from ever repeating such conduct, and beg that through her prayers you may profit by the lessons taught by her sorrows.

September 18.

MARY'S SORROWS—III.

I. CHRISTIANS commemorate as Mary's fourth great sorrow her meeting our Lord laden with His Cross. The various pangs caused to Mary's loving heart during the years of retirement at Nazareth and during the three years of our Lord's missionary career are over, and now in the few hours of the sacred Passion her soul is deluged with the intensest anguish. Immense waves of sorrow break upon that placid soul one after another—shock succeeds shock. Jesus is now the 'Man of Sorrows' . . . 'as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted' (Isa. liii. 4), and Mary is the Mother of dolours. Jesus has undergone His mock trial, and has endured many cruel outrages and sufferings. He is now on His way to death. Mary meets Him laden with His Cross. She sees at a glance His extreme exhaustion, the blood and wounds upon His sacred face, and the crown of thorns upon His head. She hears the cries of the rabble and the insults of the scoffing priests, and she witnesses the cruel treatment dealt out to her Son by the rough soldiery. How much all this cost Mary—Mary with such an enlightened faith and such a mother's love! Her loving heart was overwhelmed with sorrow to see her Divine Son in such suffering, and subject to such ignominy, and to find herself powerless to offer any relief. 'Weeping she hath wept in the night' (of her sorrows), 'and her tears are on her cheek: and there is none to comfort her among all them that were dear to her' (Lam. i. 2).

Devout Christian, admire Mary's fortitude in facing the way of the Passion. Embrace patiently the Divine Will when it pleases God to try with afflictions those who are dear to you.

II. It is especially in Mary's fifth great sorrow that we

see the fulfilment of the prophecy: 'Thy own soul a sword shall pierce.' Consider the scene. Jesus has been nailed to the Cross. He is now hanging on it, the seven words have been spoken, and the last loud cry has been uttered. His head falls upon His breast, and now Jesus is dead. The Crucifixion is Mary's fifth sorrow. On the way to Calvary women had wept; women are weeping near the Cross now. Our Lord had comforted some, saying: 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me, but weep for yourselves and your children' (St. Luke xxiii. 28). But who shall comfort Mary? Darkness covered the earth during the three hours' agony, and now nature itself proclaims that Jesus is dead, for the very rocks are split. Strong men strike their breasts; the guilty crowd hurries away terrified. What of Mary? The Evangelist says: 'There stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother' (St. John xix. 25). What a spectacle she presented of sorrow and desolation, but at the same time of constancy! She might have said with the Prophet: 'O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow' (Lam. i. 12). Mary did not desert her post. She waited on, and she saw the sacred side of Jesus pierced with a lance. Jesus was not spared even when dead.

Devout Christian, Mary did duty at the foot of the Cross not only for herself, but also for us. She gave her Son for you, and she represented you at the death of your Saviour. Oh, ever honour Mary in this immense sorrow, and tell her how much you grieve for the part your sins had in crucifying her Son.

III. Mary's sixth great sorrow was at the taking down of the Body of Jesus from the Cross, and her seventh sorrow at the burial of Jesus. Owing to the nearness of the great Sabbath, there must be haste about the interment. The Body of Jesus is received by Mary. What does she see? The prophecy is fulfilled which said: 'From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, there is no soundness therein: wounds, and bruises, and swelling sores' (Isa. i. 6). 'There is no beauty in Him, nor comeliness' (Isa. liii. 2). Yet David had said: 'With Thy comeli-

ness and Thy beauty set out' (Ps. xliv. 5). The sacred Passion wrought the change. The Body of Jesus is taken reverently and tenderly from Mary, and is now prepared for the tomb. Mary takes her sorrowful part in the last offices, prompted by piety and devotedness. The tomb is closed by a large stone, and Mary retires a desolate Mother overwhelmed with sorrow. 'To what shall I liken thee . . . that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Sion?' (Lam. ii. 13). Mary, by her incomparable patience and resignation, teaches all her children how to bear the sorrows of their exile. Her sorrows were glorious, because they were united in spirit to the sufferings of Jesus, and because they were a source of her merit and of her greatness.

Devout Christian, learn in the school of Mary how to set a true value on the trials and sorrows of life. Pray to Mary to obtain for you the grace to turn all your trials to good account for the glory of God, for the honour of your crucified Saviour, and for your own spiritual and everlasting benefit.

September 19.

SOURCES OF HAPPINESS.

I. CHRISTIANS experience many passing joys even in this land of their earthly sojourn, but these joys are not unalloyed. They are not to be preferred to that grace-given happiness and that spiritual satisfaction which reward and accompany the faithful service of God. This is the only true and constant happiness; it dwells in the depths of the soul, and is not disturbed by troubles and sorrows that ruffle only the surface. The source of this happiness is, in the first place, God; it comes of loving and serving God, of seeking Him in all things, and of being united to Him. The devout servant of God may exclaim with David: 'Oh, taste and see that the Lord is sweet!' (Ps. xxxiii. 9); he recognizes God as his only and sovereign good, and he therefore seeks no satisfaction or gain that would deprive him of God's grace, or that would be opposed to God's good pleasure. God rewards His servants by establishing them in a condition of interior peace and happiness. David says: 'Blessed is the people that knoweth jubilation. They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance: and in Thy Name they shall rejoice all the day' (Ps. lxxxviii. 16, 17). God is their immutable security and support; they are happy in their mind because they are confident that God loves them and will help them; and they are happy in their heart because of God's blessings and of the communications of grace, and because their will is in union with the Divine will.

Devout Christian, seek ever your happiness in God; such happiness is a foretaste of everlasting happiness. Be not like so many worldlings who run after vanities, and who do not know what true happiness is. Ever praise God for the blessings of His grace.

II. True Christian happiness has, in the second place, its source in a good conscience and in living in charity with our neighbour. The holy writer says: ' Blessed is the man that . . . is not pricked with the remorse of sin. Happy is he that hath had no sadness of his mind ' (Ecclus. xiv. 1, 2). A good conscience exists where piety holds its wholesome sway over our lives, keeping out sin, and preserving us in dutifulness. Then will there be rectitude in purpose, and innocence in conduct. There will result from this peace of mind, and a control over disturbing influences. David says: ' Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord: he shall delight exceedingly in His commandments. . . . His heart is strengthened, he shall not be moved until he look over his enemies ' (Ps. cxi. 1, 8). There will not, however, be true happiness unless there is peace with our neighbour, as well as with ourselves: there must be a holy bond of charity. St. Paul says: ' If it be possible as much as is in you having peace with all men ' (Rom. xii. 18). He tells us that our charity must be sincere. ' Let love be without dissimulation. Hating that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good. Loving one another with the charity of brotherhood, with honour preventing one another ' (Rom. xii. 9, 10). Rancour destroys happiness, but charity makes us happy.

Devout Christian, cherish whatever in yourself tends to create true happiness. Men are both foolish and wicked when they load their conscience with the weight of sin, and thereby deprive themselves of interior peace. They are equally perverse when they foster strife, or give pain to their neighbour; they thereby drive a dagger into their own heart. Pray, then, for the grace to love the ways of innocence and of charity, that you may be truly happy.

III. A third source of true and constant happiness is a firm hope of eternal life. We have been created to live eternally, and life has two eternal issues: the one of happiness, the portion of the just; the other of misery, the portion of the wicked. It would be impossible for us to be truly happy now in this very short life if we did not hope to be happy hereafter for ever. St. Paul says: ' We know,

if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in Heaven' (2 Cor. v. i.). With the prospect of everlasting happiness in God's kingdom before us, we patiently submit to the labours and sorrows of our present short life, and finally to the anguish of death. To secure a place in the heavenly fold of Christ we must be sheep of His fold, the one true Church, in this world. There are many, alas! who profess to believe in His Name, but who are outside the fold. It is not, however, for us to judge them. We do not know if God has not left them in good faith as they are, or if the true faith has been sufficiently presented to their conscience and been rejected by them. True Christians turn their eyes with holy trust and hope to Christ's eternal kingdom, as to the goal of their desires, and the crowning of all God's merciful works in their favour. It will be the consummation of their blessedness. David says: 'Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord: they shall praise Thee for ever and ever' (Ps. lxxxiii. 5).

Devout Christian, lift up your eyes to the everlasting kingdom of glory and bliss, and be determined, by God's grace, ever to direct your life to it. Happy are you now in belonging to the kingdom of Heaven (St. Matt. xiii. 11, 24, etc.) in this world! Be resolved to avail yourself of its blessings and helps. Beseech Mary, the heavenly Queen, to protect you by her holy patronage from all dangers by the way, and to obtain for you the grace ever to set your heart on the happiness prepared by God for His elect.

September 20.

HAPPINESS OF A DEVOUT LIFE.

I. CHRISTIANS who live devoutly, enjoy the blessing of interior peace and happiness. In such Christians we witness earnestness in faith, simple but solid virtue, and fervour in piety. Accompanying these special qualities, we see also in the devout a faithfulness in fulfilling all religious obligations, an avoidance of what might disedify in discourse or in conduct, a spirit of resignation in adversity, and a cheerfulness in their social relations. The virtues which distinguish them are truthfulness, humility, and charity. If these Christians are fervent in piety, they are nevertheless undemonstrative. The devout life led by them is an antidote and a remedy for influences baneful to the true Christian character: it is a corrective of worldliness and of vanity, and it saves them from useless pursuits and from waste of time. Such men are religious and submissive to God, not by constraint, but willingly from the heart. It is written: 'A perverse heart is abominable to the Lord: and His will is in them that walk sincerely' (Prov. xi. 20).

Devout Christian, pray for the grace to lead always a life worthy of your calling. St. Paul thus exhorted the Philippians: 'Do ye all things without murmurings and hesitations: that you may be blameless, and sincere children of God, without reproof' (Phil. ii. 14, 15). Seek your happiness not in the vanities and delusive joys of the world, but in that path of well-doing which conduces to peace and contentment that are true and lasting.

II. A devout life not only supposes and demands dutifulness, but it also conduces to it; and dutifulness always affords satisfaction both to those who display it, and to those in whose regard it is displayed. A devout life also fosters virtue, which ever engenders happiness; and it is

accompanied by regularity and beseemingness, and by steadiness and discretion in exterior conduct; and all this reacts upon the soul, yielding a self-possession and constancy which establish it in rectitude and in peace. When we consider these happy results of a devout life, they explain that simplicity and openness of character and that guilelessness which we cannot but admire in the sincerely devout. These admirable qualities mark the true servants of God, and distinguish them from men of sinister character, and of deceitful or vicious ways. It is easily seen which of these two classes enjoys peace of heart and of conscience. David says: 'The just shall rejoice in the Lord, and shall hope in Him: and all the upright in heart shall be praised' (Ps. lxiii. 11). 'Light is risen to the just, and joy to the right of heart' (Ps. xcvi. 11). This is a promise of grace and of its fruits to all devout servants of God. To them St. Paul says: 'Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice' (Phil. iv. 4).

Devout Christian, be not deluded by the deceits of the world, nor by the pretended happiness of the worldly; if there be such happiness, it is only on the surface and it is passing, therefore is it unreal. If you lead a devout life, your transient joys will not divert your mind or your heart from God, in Whom they will be fixedly centred. Say with David: 'What have I in Heaven? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? . . . Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever. . . . It is good for me to adhere to my God' (Ps. lxxii. 25-28).

III. A devout life is a happy one, because it is rewarded even in this world; it merits the blessings of a special providence. St. Paul says: 'We know that to them that love God, all things work together unto good' (Rom. viii. 28). There is, all unseen, a constant flow of blessings; and the daily occurrences that disturb or carry away the indevout will make no disturbing impression on the truly devout. As in their case there is no effort at display, and no excess of dissipation, a just mean will be observed in all social enjoyments, and these will not be followed by any baneful consequences. The devout will pursue an even way amidst

the dangers and vicissitudes of life; for, as Solomon says, 'Justice keepeth the way of the innocent' (Prov. xiii. 6). A devout life affords comfort to the mind, and to the spirit joyousness, and even light-heartedness. Especially is it rewarded with spiritual blessings and with God's favour. It is written: 'He that is good shall draw grace from the Lord' (Prov. xii. 2); and 'Where humility is, there also is wisdom. The simplicity of the just shall guide them' (Prov. xi. 2, 3). The many blessings which the devout receive in this present life are a pledge of the everlasting blessings reserved for hereafter; and this especially comforts and supports God's devout servants. Well then does David exhort them to rejoice, saying: 'Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye just, and glory, all ye right of heart' (Ps. xxxi. 11).

Devout Christian, be not remiss in piety and dutifulness; do not fall away from the fervent service of God. Let His blessings be more to you than any gains that would be attended with neglect of your duty to Him or any offence of Him. Pray for grace ever to love the ways of a devout life, that you may thus be ever associated with God's true servants, and thus be truly happy. Ask Mary, your heavenly Mother, to obtain for you the helps you need to preserve you from falling away from piety, and the strength necessary for perseverance.

September 21.

'IN DOING GOOD, LET US NOT FAIL.'

I. THE test of sincerity is constancy. This is so in serving God and leading a good life. God's claims to our love and obedience are paramount and continual. If it be good, profitable, and wise, to lead a good life, what would it be to fall away, and to discontinue leading such a life? It would be to prove ourselves unfaithful to God, and neglectful of our own welfare, and therefore would it be both wicked and unwise. There must ever be a constancy in combating evil, and a continued and often renewed effort to do good. This is the clear meaning of St. Paul's words: 'In doing good, let us not fail' (Gal. vi. 9). Perverseness is the greatest obstacle to pursuing this desirable conduct, and remissness is the next obstacle. Where there is perverseness there is a turning away from man's last end, and where there is remissness there is heedlessness in attaining this necessary end, and both are contrary to God's will and design. If we prove ourselves constant, we may say with David: 'I set the Lord always in my sight: for He is at my right hand, that I be not moved' (Ps. xv. 8). By God's grace we shall be preserved from defeat in the warfare of life.

Devout Christian, often renew your protestations of fidelity to God, thus to maintain your constancy in the holy path of a truly Christian life. Upon your constancy depends your interior peace and happiness. Be not forgetful of, or ungrateful for, the countless helps and blessings you have received from God, and pray for grace to fulfil all His gracious designs in your regard.

II. Let us not fail in doing all that our Christian vocation demands of us. How much this is! If in every condition of life there are many details of duty that have to

be complied with, why should it not be so also in God's service and in working out our salvation ? Let us not fail in observing all that God's commandments demand of us; let us not fail in obedience to the Church, whose laws wisely require us to do what tends to our spiritual good; let us not fail in prayer, by which we directly worship God and seek His help in all our necessities; let us not fail in charity towards our neighbour, for charity is ' the bond of perfection ' (Col. iii. 14); let us not fail in fulfilling the obligations of our particular calling; let us not fail in becomingness of conduct; and, finally, let us not fail in industry and assiduity, for idleness causes a loss both of time and of many opportunities of doing good. Is not all this what the Apostle would insist upon when he says: ' In doing good, let us not fail '? Let there be no omission and no neglect, but a faithful fulfilment of all God's demands upon us.

Devout Christian, pray that you may be assiduous in doing good. Every day has its duties, its trials, and its combats. Strive that you may not be found wanting. Of the just man it is written: ' His will is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he shall meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season. And his leaf shall not fall off ' (Ps. i. 2, 3). Be ever solicitous to fulfil God's law, and to yield the fruits of a good life.

III. St. Paul says: ' Charity never falleth away ' (1 Cor. xiii. 8). If we truly love God, we shall not depart from the path of a good life, and our constancy and perseverance will be crowned with the heavenly reward. Happy shall we be if our days are full of good works ! Now is the time for labour and for merit; ' the night cometh, when no man can work ' (St. John ix. 4). St. Paul says: ' Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and unmovable; always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not vain in the Lord ' (1 Cor. xv. 58); and again he says: ' In due time we shall reap not failing.' The Holy Scriptures are full of promises of reward for the just.

Speaking of the resurrection, our Lord said: 'They that have done good things, shall come forth unto the resurrection of life' (St. John v. 29). Then shall the just rejoice that by God's grace they did good, and did not fall away; that they avoided all perverseness and remissness, and strove to do what was pleasing to God. Then shall the wicked lament, but vainly, their evil mind and perverse will. 'They that have done evil (shall come forth) unto the resurrection of judgment.'

Devout Christian, reflect upon the two issues which our Lord puts before you. Attach yourself firmly to His service. Keep your perverse will ever submissive to His law. Repent of all your remissness and of all your sins. Beseech Mary, your loving heavenly Mother, to obtain for you the grace not to fall away from the ways of a devout life, but to labour ever more earnestly to please God and to merit the reward of piety.

September 22.

FRUITS OF FAITH AND PIETY.

I. Faith and piety are as the two sources from which the truly Christian life derives its vitality and energy. A lively faith comes of docility to the teaching of the Church, and of a desire and endeavour to be well instructed in doctrine. It comes also of frequent reflection on the Divine mysteries, on the eternal truths, and on the lessons of our Lord's life and words. It is not enough that we should know what is taught. Faith must provide us with guiding principles, and we must bring its light and its lessons to bear upon our whole conduct. In times of difficulty, trial, and temptation, and in fulfilling our daily duties, faith should furnish us with instruction and guidance. Piety is another source of spiritual good; it may be termed the stream of Divine charity. Piety must accompany faith. It is necessary to foster piety. We may do this by prayer, by hearing Holy Mass, and by frequenting the Sacraments, by watchfulness over our conduct, and by profitable reading. An amount of earnestness must, therefore, be displayed; for if piety be not nourished in the ways just mentioned, it will become weak and it will languish.

Devout Christian, let it be your constant endeavour to nourish both faith and piety, that they may in turn nourish your Christian life. Pray for these heavenly gifts, which are so necessary to you. Without faith there will be a fatal obscurity, and without piety a fatal callousness.

II. Happy fruits manifest themselves in Christians who have a lively and practical faith and an earnest and constant piety. Our Lord said of the man who should believe in Him that from him should flow rivers of living water (St. John vii. 38). By 'rivers' are denoted the abundance,

force, and efficacy of spiritual grace, and of its operations. What rivers have we not seen in the Church in every age, manifested in the lives and works of her Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, and Virgins! What an abundant evidence of spiritual gifts, of zeal, charity, devotedness, eloquence, wisdom, and learning! Similar gifts according to the measure of God's giving are still bestowed upon all who, with faith and piety, drink at the fountains of grace. 'With Thee,' says the Psalmist, 'is the fountain of life' (Ps. xxxv. 10). And our Lord said: 'He that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst for ever: but the water that I will give him, shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life' (St. John iv. 13, 14).

Devout Christian, desire that your life may manifest the fruits of grace. Be, therefore, assiduous in prayer, and seek to draw from the Holy Mass and the Sacraments the abundant graces which proceed from these spiritual fountains. Let your faith and piety be shown forth in your faithful observance of God's law, in your love of Christian virtue, and in edifying conversation and conduct.

III. The fruits of faith and piety should be manifest in ourselves, and through us also in our neighbour. The Holy Ghost, Who is the Source of all sanctity, will produce spiritual fruits in us, measuring His bounty to some extent according to our application and endeavour. Through His bounty we shall come to realize more fully the teachings of God's revelation, and to experience a greater relish for doctrine; and through His heavenly grace we shall be drawn to love prayer, dutifulness, and virtue, and whatever will contribute to our spiritual welfare. Then the living water we have ourselves imbibed at the Divine fountains will flow on to others. This happy result will proceed from the edification we shall give, and from our prayers for others. We shall uphold good principles and give good advice, and the example of our piety and dutifulness will make a salutary impression upon our neighbour, and even lead him to imitation. How sad is the case of men without faith! They are without the very

foundation of true religion. How sad, too, is the case of men without piety! They are without religion's very sap and staying power.

Devout Christian, thank God for His bountiful dispensations in your regard. Pray that your life may not be barren in spiritual fruits and in useful influence. Desire to attain the true Christian ideal in instinct, sentiment, and conduct. Beseech Mary, the most perfect of creatures, whose life was fruitful in all good, to assist you by her powerful intercession, that your life may be ever supported and sanctified by a lively and practical faith, and by earnest piety.

September 23.

THE SINNER'S JOYS.

I. It may appear to the wicked that, whereas the portion of the just is one of labour and bitterness by reason of many tribulations, their own portion is one of joy and ease. They do not weigh their own case in the scales of truth, but they deceive themselves; and as to the case of the just, they do not judge of it aright, because they do not understand it. True joy is numbered among the fruits of the Holy Ghost, and it is a fruit of which the wicked do not participate. What, then, in the interest of truth, should be said of the joys of the sinner? They are joys, for the sake of which he parts with true joy, for the sake of which he neglects his duty to God, and incurs all the terrible consequences of mortal sin. They are passing pleasures and satisfactions afforded by what is vain, contrary to God's most perfect law, and often base and shameful. Often what the sinner delights in enslaves him to some of the deadly sins, and renders him a source of moral danger to his neighbour. Often in pursuing false and base pleasures, the sinner, besides running up a terrible reckoning against himself at the tribunal of God's justice, makes enemies for himself now, and, moreover, wastes and abuses his own talents, strength, and leisure. For these unreal joys the sinner foregoes his claim to the everlasting joys of Heaven.

Devout Christian, turn resolutely from all deceptive pleasures. Pray for heavenly wisdom to unmask the real evil of everything that would render you displeasing to God. The tribulations of the just, to which are attached many consolations now and a great reward hereafter, are preferable to the so-called joys of the wicked, who basely disregard God's love and friendship.

II. The so-called pleasures of the sinner are short-lived, yet for them the sinner wrecks his true happiness. How often the joys attached to dissipation, gambling, intemperance, or sensual sins, die away in a few hours, and are followed by bitter regrets and various miseries! How often ill-gotten gain, unlawful intimacies, and worldly vanities cease quickly to afford unalloyed satisfaction, besides giving cause for disquieting misgivings and various anxieties! But even were the joys of the sinner to last for a lifetime, how quickly that lifetime would pass, and then they would end. Is not the sinner following a mere shadow in seeking satisfaction in such joys as these, for upon whom does fortune always smile? What ship on the ocean has her sails always filled with a favourable breeze? With the best of men pleasures are mixed with various annoyances, and so must it be in the case of the sinner and his unreal joys. When the sinner finds his satisfaction in indulging his lower appetites, it is attended by a debasing of his mind and heart. Vice causes degeneration in the mental faculties, and corrupts the affections. Neglect of religion, even when not accompanied by the grosser vices, lessens the sinner's sense of higher things, and leaves him an easy prey to what is contrary to reason and virtue. What view, then, should be taken of the sinner's joys? Do they not ill compensate him for his loss of God's friendship, and for the everlasting darkening of his future?

Devout Christian, weigh the sinner's joys in the scales of Divine justice, for by these scales will the future and eternal issues of life be determined. Shun the unreal joys of things forbidden by God. Love 'the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding' (Phil. iv. 7). Solomon says: 'Joy followeth them that take counsels of peace' (Prov. xii. 20).

III. While the sinner pretends to be in joy, his conscience racks him with uneasiness and remorse. His soul is burdened with many sins, and by continuance in the way of evil, and of neglect of duty to God, the sinner adds to the burden of his guilt. This does not tend to make

him happy, but quite contrariwise. Even though he may strive to banish from his mind all thought of God's judgments and of the terrors of Hell, there is yet one thought ever confronting him and filling him with alarm—namely, that he must die sooner or later, and that death may come at any time. As the wise servant of the parable (St. Matt. xxiv. 46) was prepared for his lord's coming, so is the just man ready for God's call; but the sinner dreads God's summons, even as the foolish servant dreaded his lord's return. The sinner's pretended joys are further disturbed by the turmoil created in his breast by his passions, and often he is carried to commit follies that cause him trouble and misery. The holy writer says: 'Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins' (Wisd. i. 4). How true, then, is it that the sinner wrecks his own happiness! When will he enter into himself, and release himself from the delusions which conceal the truth from him? When will he understand that there are real joys, which might be his if only he would seek them?

Devout Christian, let your joy be in Christ your Saviour, and in His holy service. Despise and shun the delusive and unreal joys which are offered by the world, and which are found in the paths of evil. It is written: 'The just shall rejoice in the Lord' (Ps. lxiii. 11). Beg of Mary, whom we style the 'Cause of our Joy,' to obtain for you a share of the joys and consolations which her Divine Son bestows upon His faithful followers.

September 24.

THE JUST MAN'S JOYS.

I. We learn from the Holy Scriptures that there are true joys, and that these are the portion of the just. These joys are as the present reward of God's servants, and they are the beginnings of joys that shall be everlasting. The Apostles taught 'that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God' (Acts xiv. 21); but this experience of trials is not incompatible with the enjoyment of spiritual consolations, which more than compensate us for the hardships, labours, sorrows, and persecutions which may be our portion; but our chief consolation is the hope of the heavenly reward. The just man, enlightened by faith, sees how wisely everything is ordained by God, and he therefore fulfils joyfully all that God demands of him. If he must keep the commandments, he sees that they are holy in themselves, and that they require him to do what is best to be done. He offers to God his obedience as a pleasing worship and as a pledge of his love. If he has to combat inordinate affections and the evil propensities of fallen nature, he sees how wisely this is ordained, for he recognizes the errors and disorders to which such affections and propensities lead. If sorrows, losses, and disappointments fall to his lot, he sees how these tend to chasten his soul and to detach him from too great a love of this present life. Supported by grace and comforted by conformity with the Divine will, the just man under his trials clings to God, and moves steadily onward in the path of a good life.

Devout Christian, ever act the part of a dutiful servant of God, and you will experience the truth of our Lord's words: 'My yoke is sweet and My burden light' (St. Matt. xi. 30).

II. The just man recognizes that true joy does not proceed from worldly gaiety and dissipation, or from any source unblessed by God. There are innocent pleasures and satisfactions which do not interfere with religious obligations nor contravene the laws of rectitude, and these have their place in his life. Among them are the duties of charity and good understanding with the neighbour. Some of the offices of benevolence are mentioned by St. Paul: 'With honour preventing one another. . . . Pursuing hospitality. . . . Rejoice with them that rejoice. . . . Not minding high things, but consenting to the humble. . . . Providing good things not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men' (Rom. xii. 10-17). The just man has happy relations with rich and poor, and he finds time for necessary relaxation; but at all times he experiences the greatest joy of all in the love of God, which inflames his heart, and makes him place God before him in all his works. While his conscience does not upbraid him with acting from wrong motives, or with any unworthy conduct, there is a joyfulness in his spirit which bears him up amidst the cares and troubles of life. This joyfulness and other interior consolations, coming from the Holy Ghost, are the fruit of holy living and the reward which accompanies God's blessing. This is the 'joy to the right of heart' of which David speaks (Ps. xcvi. 11). Comforted and encouraged by pure joys, the just man turns his back on the false joys of the world, and renders to God a willing and devoted service.

Devout Christian, ask yourself in what things you take pleasure. In search of joy do not pursue those things which are unblessed by God. Let your labour be one of love—namely, of love for God; then may you expect those fruits of joy and consolation which proceed from God's blessing.

III. The interior joys which the just man experiences in the present life will end at its close. These joys are not the only reward which he will receive for his faithful service. No; there are before him everlasting joys. To secure these unending joys men have forsaken the riches,

possessions, and pleasures of the world, and have given themselves to a life of retirement, penance, labour, and prayer. All are not called thus to leave the world in order to secure the heavenly reward. We may desire it as truly, and work for it as earnestly, while we pursue worldly avocations. The heavenly joys are the golden prize which the just man puts before him. His hope of attaining to them buoys up his spirit and comforts him in his trials. Who would not endure some passing affliction or hardship in order to escape everlasting punishment and to secure eternal rest and happiness? When St. Paul exhorted the faithful to be steadfast and immovable and to abound in the work of the Lord, he encouraged them, saying: 'Knowing that your labour is not vain in the Lord' (1 Cor. xv. 58). The just man knows that no one who serves God earnestly will be without the promised reward. Solomon says: 'God hath given to a man that is good in His sight, wisdom and knowledge, and joy' (Eccles. ii. 26); wisely, then, does such a one turn his eyes to the further joy which is promised to the faithful servant. The day of final reckoning will yet come, and then shall he hear the comforting words: 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord' (St. Matt. xxv. 21).

Devout Christian, choose now the joys which you desire, but choose wisely. Choose that measure of true joy now, which God bestows upon those who love Him, and choose for the future those everlasting joys which are the portion of the just. Recommend yourself with renewed piety to Mary, and plead for her patronage and prayers that you may be saved from taking any false step in life, but may ever pursue the ways of religion and virtue that lead to the kingdom of everlasting joys.

September 25.

EVERLASTING JOYS FOLLOW EARTHLY SORROWS.

I. In our present condition of trial, God lovingly consoles us with the promise of everlasting joys. He seems to say to us in our sorrows what our Lord said to His Apostles in theirs: 'I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you' (St. John xvi. 22). The happiest of lives in this world is not without its experience of trouble and sorrow. This experience seems the appointed portion of God's faithful servants, for David says: 'Many are the afflictions of the just' (Ps. xxxiii. 20). There are misgivings, anxieties, and disappointments in our own breast, failure in our enterprises, coldness and injustices on the part of others, bereavements in our families, and hardships or sickness, and other such trials. Do they not tell us that our present life is not to be our only life? We have not been created to endure these labours and sorrows always. We have, indeed, occasional seasons of joy and comfort, but they are quickly followed by some fresh trial. What, then, must we do? God does not deny us many consolations and the blessing of interior peace, but we must look with hope to everlasting joys, for these are appointed for us, and they are awaiting us. Our Lord said to His Apostles: 'Your sorrow shall be turned into joy' (St. John xvi. 20); thus we are confident will it be with us also.

Devout Christian, cling to God in your afflictions; embrace them patiently and without murmuring. David said in his afflictions: 'All these things have come upon us, yet we have not forgotten Thee. . . . Thou hast humbled us in the place of affliction; and the shadow of death hath covered us' (Ps. xliii. 18, 20). There are brighter days for those who turn their trials to good account.

II. What, then, are the joys prepared for us in the future life? We are to possess for ever the kingdom prepared for us by God from the foundation of the world (St. Matt. xxv. 34). In that heavenly kingdom will God manifest Himself to us in all His majesty, beauty, and glory, and make us participators in everlasting bliss. All that God does is magnificent, kingly, and Divine. How will it be when He rewards His faithful servants according to His sacred promises? The Holy Ghost by the pen of St. John describes the City of the Blessed (Apoc. xxi. and xxii.) as one of gold, paved with gold, pellucid as crystal and shining like jewels, having walls of precious stones; its twelve gates twelve pearls; no night there, nor sun, nor moon, for God Himself enlightens it, and the Lamb is its lamp. It is watered by a river clear as crystal, overshadowed on each bank by the tree of life. Our reward in Heaven will comprise the glorification of both body and soul. Our body, now subject to diseases, fatigue, and death, and in many ways troublesome to us, will in Heaven be incorruptible, immortal, adorned with unspeakable comeliness and glory, and everlastingly ravished with heavenly delights. Our soul, now borne down by many miseries and suffering from many disadvantages, will in Heaven enjoy unalloyed bliss, raised above itself by heavenly gifts and adornments, and by the light of glory it will see all things in their cause and source—namely, in God. Its every faculty will be specially gifted, and will have its suitable delights. Our senses, as of seeing and hearing, will have their full satisfaction in inexpressible joys.

Devout Christian, bear all things patiently now, as a preparation for the enjoyment of the bliss of Paradise. Ever praise God Who invites you to the joys of Heaven, and Who, by a continual bestowal of graces, helps you to persevere in the path of virtue and piety which leads to so great a reward.

III. When the just enter into the enjoyment of the blessedness prepared for them in Heaven, they will be where there are no sinners, no enemies, no unkind or un-

reasonable neighbours, but in the company of those whom they love and who love them. They will enjoy the most holy and delightful company of the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Virgins, and Saints of every rank, and of the holy Angels, with Mary the most glorious of all the blessed. They will be for ever ravished with delight by the love of their King and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and of the ever adorable Persons of the Divine Trinity. The bliss of all this is beyond our power now to comprehend. Shall we not think of these heavenly joys, and sigh to attain to them ? Shall we prefer earthly joys and affections ? Of what kind is the faith of men who, when they draw near the close of their earthly career, lament that the time has come to leave the land of their exile ? Do they prefer this land of darkness and misery to the kingdom of light and glory ? Do they prefer their earthly sorrows to the heavenly and everlasting joys ? Let it not be so with us; but let us desire to be with God, our Heavenly Father, and in the everlasting society of the blessed, enjoying the sweetness, repose, and delights of the celestial kingdom. Let us, like St. Paul, have 'a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ' (Phil. i. 23).

Devout Christian, weigh the value of your present sorrows by the rewards which will be yours if you bear them in a spirit of conformity with the Divine pleasure. Even in this world God dispenses consolations after afflictions; but look onward to the world to come, and desire the joys in store for the faithful friends of Christ. Beseech Mary, your advocate with Jesus, to obtain for you grace to enter into God's designs both for your present and future life.

September 26.

THE SINNER'S SOWING AND REAPING.

I. MAN's life is a constant sowing. We are ever casting our seeds, and these seeds will yield harvest according to their kind. If our thoughts, desires, aims, words, and actions be as seeds of good wheat, they will yield a pleasing harvest of golden corn; but if they be as cockle seeds they will yield an undesirable harvest of weeds fit only to be burned. The sinner, by committing mortal sins, prepares for himself an award of everlasting punishment. By his breaches of the Divine law, by his sinful gains and pleasures, he incurs the wrath of God. He thereby loses God's grace now, and hereafter he will be committed to the prison of Hell, from which there will be no escape (St. Luke xvi. 26). Holy Job pronounces the hardened sinner's woe, where he says: 'Let him pass from the snow waters to excessive heat, and his sin even to Hell. Let mercy forget him: may worms be his sweetness: let him be remembered no more, but be broken in pieces as an unfruitful tree' (Job xxiv. 19, 20). Heedless of the Divine commands and warnings, the sinner sows the seeds of an evil life. What, then, may he expect? St. Paul says: 'What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap' (Gal. vi. 8).

Devout Christian, the justice of God will find us all out, and will weigh all our thoughts, words, and deeds. Be resolved to weigh them yourself now, and to study what will be their consequence. The sinner bent upon evil weighs nothing, and closes his eyes to the consequences of his sins. Too late will he know his fatal folly.

II. The sinner reaps eternal woe. In vain do men deny that so terrible a doom awaits those who turn against God, and those who ignore God's claim to their service and who die unrepentant. God's punishments are measured out by

His infinite justice. We must remember that mortal sin is an outrage on the part of the creature against his Divine Creator, Who is an infinite and eternal Being, that it is a breach of the Divine law of the Supreme Lawgiver, and that in its commission we abuse our free-will and other gifts of God, and despise God's grace and friendship. Moreover, the sinner rejects and despises the Sovereign, Infinite, and Eternal Good for the sake of a miserable and, often, base gain or gratification. By mortal sin, the sinner directly opposes God's design in giving him existence, and knowingly draws upon himself God's everlasting displeasure and punishment. St. Paul said of those who persecuted the faithful in his day, words which apply to all sinners: 'It is a just thing with God to repay tribulation to them that trouble you. . . . Who shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction, from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His power' (2 Thess. i. 6, 9). The justice of God, which rewards the just with everlasting glory, is displayed also when it awards to the wicked everlasting punishment. Thus, too, is manifested the reality of God's triumph over His enemies.

Devout Christian, be filled with dread and awe when you contemplate the irremediable evil which the sinner reaps. It is a harvest of his own sowing. The sowing of a bad life and of a life in which nothing is done for God and to merit Heaven, yields no heavenly harvest, but an eternity of woe.

III. How awful is the sinner's doom! The sinner loses God and all that is good; he falls under God's curse: 'Depart from Me, you cursed' (St. Matt. xxv. 41). He will have for his companions throughout eternity the reprobate Angels and all the wicked who are under condemnation and punishment equally with himself; he will be for ever tormented with pain of soul and body, without any mitigation or relief. His everlasting abode will be the pit of Hell, where there will be the outer darkness, the inextinguishable fire, the undying worm, the fire and brimstone, and every variety of torment. The kind and intensity of the punishment will be justly apportioned according to

the kind and number of sins committed, but in every case it will be everlasting. The wicked ' shall go into everlasting punishment ' (St. Matt. xxv. 46). O sinner, before the day of doom arrives, condemn and repent of your evil deeds. Let the light of religion and of reason fall upon your conduct, that you may acknowledge how unworthy it is. Turn, while you yet have time, to God, the most tender Father of all mercies, Who wills not the death of a sinner, but that he be converted and live. By sincere sorrow, conversion, and amendment, avert from yourself the awful doom of the unrepentant sinner.

Devout Christian, ' watch and pray,' lest any wile of Satan, or weakness of nature, should lead you to offend God by grievous sin. The holiest are not secure from temptation. Let the doom of the wicked inspire you with a wholesome and constant detestation of all evil ways. Pray to Mary to obtain for you light and strength to guard against every danger of committing mortal sin.

September 27.

THE JUST MAN'S SOWING AND REAPING.

I. God has His servants in this world whose lives are a preparation for the world to come; they are sowing the seeds of a glorious immortality. They sow in all kinds and conditions of rank, nationality, employment, fortune, and surroundings. None of these things are an obstacle to the direction of life to conformity with the Divine Will, and to the eternal destiny for which God has created us. God's servants in every vocation and in every circumstance may aim at holiness, practise virtue, and fulfil the conditions of salvation. God tries his servants by adversity and sorrow; but even then the good work of sowing will yet go on, and His servants turn all things to their spiritual and everlasting profit. It is written: 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. Going they went and wept, casting their seeds. But coming they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves' (Ps. cxxv. 5-7). These words have no application to the wicked in their miseries, for all their sowing is profitless and ends in disaster. In the case, however, of the just, who shall be numbered hereafter among God's Elect, every meritorious action performed in the state of grace is as a good seed which will yield in the life to come its fruit of bliss and glory.

Devout Christian, be not heedless in doing good. 'What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap.' Be resolute in avoiding the occasions of sin, in resisting every kind of evil or dangerous temptation, and in doing those things by which the just merit their everlasting reward.

II. The whole reward of good deeds is not reserved for the future. The just, being in the state of grace, sow the good seed, not only by the performance of the eminent good works—prayer, fasting, and alms-deeds—but also by

the ordinary actions of everyday life, performed with a good intention. These good works and ordinary actions, performed under these conditions, advance the important work of the sanctification of the just, merit an increase of sanctifying grace and of interior peace and satisfaction, and dispose the soul for yet further graces and Divine favours. But reserved for the future is the inconceivable everlasting reward, an incorruptible crown (1 Cor. ix. 25), 'a crown of justice' (2 Tim. iv. 8), prepared by our Lord for all who 'love His coming.' The just shall go 'into life everlasting' (St. Matt. xxv. 46); they shall hear the sentence of their reward: 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Oh, who is there that does not desire to hear these consoling words, which will fix for ever the destiny of God's Elect? Why will not men sow the good seed which promises this glorious harvest? Why are so many lives spent with little or no effort to reap spiritual profit now, and everlasting reward hereafter? If the ways of justice are not attractive of themselves—as, indeed, they verily are—should they not be so because of the rewards to which they lead?

Devout Christian, recall how David said: 'I have inclined my heart to do Thy justifications for ever, for the reward' (Ps. cxviii. 112). Do not count any effort or labour for God too great, or suffering too trying, which will merit an eternal weight of glory. 'Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb' (Apoc. xix. 9).

III. Of the just it is written that 'their works follow them' (Apoc. xiv. 13). Good works are not seed that dies: they fructify in peace, joy, bliss, and glory, which are everlasting. O blessed inheritance of all who die in God's grace, may you be ours! No other inheritance is worthy of our effort. May we never lose sight of you! May the thought of your greatness and of your eternity support us in our struggle against evil, and stimulate us in our effort to lead a life pleasing to God! The reward is all too great for the little we do, but not too great to satisfy

God's love of His Elect, and our Saviour's infinite merits applied so generously for their benefit. When it is God's love that will lavish itself upon those who have loved Him, and whom He loves, oh how wonderful will be the everlasting blessedness which they shall enjoy! The just will possess God Himself in an ineffable manner, and in Him they shall find every delight and satisfaction, and they will possess Him in the company and mutual love of our Blessed Lady and all the Angels and Saints. With so great a reward in view, we can understand why St. James said: 'My brethren, count it all joy when you shall fall into divers temptations' (i. 2).

Devout Christian, let the exhortation of St. Peter guide your earnest effort: 'Labour the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election' (2 St. Peter i. 10). Good works are the good seed that yields the heavenly harvest. What seed are you sowing? Bring to your works the purest intentions and perform them in a way to please God. Recommend yourself and all your undertakings to Mary, and beseech her to obtain for you the Divine blessing, that they may bear fruit in everlasting life.

September 28.

GOD PROMISES HEAVEN TO THE JUST.

I. From the beginning of the world men have been taught by God that they have been created to enjoy, after their trial in this life, the heavenly reward. Our Lord, when He came to be Himself our Teacher, taught the same doctrine. We strive for Heaven under a promise made to all the just by God, Who cannot but be faithful to His word. This consoling promise inspires us with a sense of joy which is like a foretaste of its realization. It has carried many Saints into seraphic raptures, it has induced holy souls to tread the paths of perfection, it has supported many care-worn Christians under afflictions which, without it, would have crushed their spirit, and it has drawn from the downward way sinners who were running to their destruction. When the day of trial is over, our Lord will say to the just and faithful servant: 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord' (St. Matt. xxv. 21). Holy Job knew that his afflictions, borne with patience, would not fail to merit for him a great reward; therefore did he say: 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth . . . I shall see my God' (Job xix. 25, 26). Such, too, was the confidence of the elder Tobias, when he said: 'We are the children of Saints, and look for that life which God will give to those that never change their faith from Him' (Tob. ii. 18).

Devout Christian, let God's promise of the heavenly reward lead you to avoid and despise everything which would deprive you of so great a reward, and inspire you with courage and patience under the difficulties and cares of the present life of trial. The road you are on may be a rough and strait one, but it leads to everlasting life (St. Matt. vii. 14).

II. God's promise of Heaven is a powerful incentive to perseverance in leading a good life. Tobias said: 'We shall have many good things if we fear God and depart from sin and do that which is good' (Tob. iv. 23). Our Lord will yet say to the just: 'Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things' (St. Matt. xxv. 21). God will fulfil all His promises. It is men who fail to fulfil the conditions of salvation and who are themselves the cause of their not gaining the heavenly reward. Some who begin well presently forget their good resolutions and fall away. Do they lose sight of the heavenly reward? How many there are who count the cost of attaining it, and perversely refuse to pay it! Too late, alas! will they discover their folly. We must not seek to shirk the conditions. If there must be labour, effort, and suffering, there will always be also heavenly grace to aid and support us. St. Paul says: 'Be ye steadfast and immovable; always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not vain in the Lord' (1 Cor. xv. 58). Many and severe were his own labours and sufferings, but he was not disheartened. He tells us by what thought and hope he was consoled, where he says: 'That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory' (2 Cor. iv. 17). While we persevere in leading a good life, we may enjoy the same consoling hope, for our Lord has said: 'They that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life' (St. John v. 29).

Devout Christian, return thanks to God for the comfort of His holy promises. Labour will be followed by rest, the battle of life by everlasting peace, darkness and gloom by the heavenly brightness, and sorrow by unending joy. We must await the time God has appointed for our receiving the rewards, but they are prepared for us, and they await us beyond the horizon of our fleeting life.

III. It should greatly comfort us not only to know that God has made us such rich and consoling promises, but also to feel that He is ever abetting us in our efforts to realize

them. Divine grace is ever at hand to help us. We may represent to ourselves God as a loving Father, stooping over His children, encompassing them lest aught of real evil should befall them, and aiding them to rise when they have fallen. By interior inspirations, by answers to prayer, by the help of Holy Sacraments, by the light of Divine teaching, by the exhortations of spiritual shepherds, by the aid of good example, and in many other ways, and by inspiring us with hope and with fear, grace, working interiorly and exteriorly, provides for all our soul's wants, and furnishes us with help and guidance on our way to the promised rewards. How truly God loves us! But, alas! how great is our inconstancy in return for His love and in corresponding with His many graces! If we should not be saved, how great will be our perversity, seeing how the floodgates of God's grace are ever open, how sacramental streams, as of Christ's precious Blood, are everywhere available, how the Divine food of the Eucharistic Banquet is ever being distributed, how God's ear is ever open to every form of prayer, and how mercy and forgiveness are ever at hand for the repenting sinner! See, too, bright Angels waiting upon us to guard and enlighten us, and the whole court of Heaven, with Christ's most holy Mother at its head, making constant intercession for us.

Devout Christian, be resolved to avail yourself assiduously of these many helps to salvation, and you may feel assured that, by God's grace, you will attain to the heavenly reward. Pray to Mary, the heavenly Queen, to use her constant intercession in your behalf, and to obtain for you grace to direct your life at all times towards God's everlasting kingdom.

September 29.

THE FALL OF LUCIFER.

1. CHRISTIANS may learn from Lucifer's fall the evil of turning against God. Why should they ever turn against Him? Is He not the supreme and eternal Sovereign, and unchangeable and eternal goodness, beauty, and love? 'God is charity' (1 St. John iv. 8, 16). When Christians turn against God by mortal sin, they are guilty of a perversity and of a folly resembling Lucifer's. The fall of Lucifer is usually attributed to pride and ambition. The beauty, splendid gifts, and exaltedness bestowed upon him by God were to him the occasion of a wanton self-complacency which led him to ambition for himself the throne of the Most High. O wretched and rebellious Angel, should you not have been God's most grateful and most loyal subject? Arise, O Michael, and vindicate God's outraged honour. Let your battle-cry resound through the heavens: 'Who is like unto God?' and bring to your side the mighty host of Heaven. 'There was a great battle in Heaven: Michael and his Angels fought with the dragon' (Apoc. xii. 7). Thus, too, let the just ever range themselves on God's side to fight against all the powers of evil. How disgraceful it is for Christians to be found in the ranks of those who discard religion, of those who are guilty of spiritual rebellion, or of those who pander to vice!

Devout Christian, put on the armour of a lively faith. Be loyal to the Church, and frequent the Holy Sacraments, that you may be ever found active and courageous in the cause of God, of religion, and of virtue. On earth, too, has been raised the standard of revolt, and 'Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly' (Ps. i. 1).

II. Let us apply to Lucifer's fall the words of Isaias:

'How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning? . . . And thou saidst in thy heart: I will ascend into Heaven. . . . I will be like the Most High. But yet thou shalt be brought down to Hell' (Isa. xiv. 12-15). St. Michael victoriously drove forth the wretched Apostate and the fallen host. Our Lord said: 'I saw Satan like lightning falling from Heaven' (St. Luke x. 18). Lucifer went forth stripped of his beauty, power, dignity, and privileges. He went forth deprived of grace and of the friendship of God, and of the companionship of the Angels. How changed was at once his condition! It would have been better for Lucifer to have lost a thousand worlds or a thousand lives than to have lost God. The loss of God is the greatest of all evils and of all punishments. Not only has Lucifer lost God: he has also become God's enemy. The loss and the enmity are equally everlasting. There will never be any restoration to favour, even for a time, and the enmity, with its most terrible consequences, will never cease. 'See ye,' God says, 'that I alone am, and there is no other God besides Me . . . and there is none that can deliver out of My hand. . . . If I shall whet My sword as the lightning, and My hand take hold on judgment: I will render vengeance to My enemies, and repay them that hate Me' (Deut. xxxii. 39, 41). Who should not fear to lose the friendship of God? Oh, you who seem to live without God, save yourselves while there is yet time.

Devout Christian, seek ever to treasure God's grace. With God on your side, what blessings may you not hope for! But if God were against you, how great would then be the evils to be feared! 'How good is God to Israel, to them that are of a right heart' (Ps. lxxii. 1). 'Happy is that people whose God is the Lord' (Ps. cxliii. 15).

III. How changed is the fallen Lucifer! He was the bright leader of the angelic host, but now he is the archfiend; he was a citizen of Heaven, but now he is a demon of Hell; he was beloved by all the celestial Spirits, but now he is hated and dreaded by all God's creatures. God, Who built up the edifice of Lucifer's greatness and power,

has cast it down, and has utterly and irreparably destroyed it. Now deprived of all honour, Lucifer is called Satan, a dragon, the old serpent, a basilisk, and a roaring lion. He has lost heavenly and everlasting glory, and the kingdom of God; and he has passed ignominiously into the exterior darkness, into the region of endless despair, and into the place of everlasting punishment, where there is no hope, no ease, no consolation, no rest, no joy, no peace. Hell is the abode of hatred, horror, wailing, blasphemy, rage, and torment. O sinners, will you fall away from God? Will you remain in your sins? Will you incur God's wrath and punishment? When will you enter into yourselves, and seek to flee from the wrath to come?

Devout Christian, thank God for enlisting you among His faithful followers, and for all the graces, gifts, and privileges which accompany your vocation. Pray for grace to love always the things that are pleasing to Him, and to obey all His commands. Recommend yourself to Mary, and ask her to obtain for you, by her pleading, light and guidance to avoid the ways of evil, and heavenly aid to repress every rebellious spirit within you which might lead you to disregard your duty to God.

September 30.

GOD'S TRIUMPH.

I. We have not yet reached the time of God's final triumph over all who oppose His sovereignty or disregard His commands. In the meantime God is ever asserting in various ways His dominion, and is ever bringing to a successful issue the battles of His servants. History records the constant strife of the world against the Church. It has been carried on by the rulers of nations, and by unchristian society. At times the cry has been raised: 'The Church is the enemy.' The unwise and perverse generation declare her to be the enemy of learning, of progress, and of liberty. She is, indeed, the enemy of everything that is hurtful and unprofitable in education, and irreligious and immoral in literature; she is the enemy of unchristian and unjust notions and principles in the development of the social system; and she is the enemy of dangerous upheavals of unrestrained forces and of all licence. She, furthermore, demands that all movements should be safeguarded by the guidance and help of religion. Many have been the Church's contests with the world, and as many, too, have been her victories. When the world has deemed the Church overthrown, never to rise again, and has proclaimed a delusive victory, and when her Pontiffs have been driven into exile, religion has all unexpectedly lifted its noble and imperishable head. God will ever triumph in His Church.

Devout Christian, recognize in the cause of the Church the cause of God. The gates of Hell shall never prevail against the Church. Regard her as the ark of salvation.

II. Another contest is that of the wicked against the just. It usually takes the form of persecution and oppression. There is, however, a more insidious form,

and this is the corruption of manners. The wicked say with the Egyptians, when they had turned against the Israelites: 'Come, let us wisely oppress them, lest they multiply' (Exod. i. 10). The uprightness and religiousness of the just is a reproach to the wicked which they perversely resent. Alas! how zealous in an evil cause are the worldly and irreligious! Every effort at perversion is attempted, and every means is employed to further the unholy cause. The wicked enlist on their side and for their purposes the Press, literature, art, pictorial illustrations, fashions, theatrical representations, popular entertainments, secret societies, and lectures; they use ridicule, plausible arguments, and false principles; and they introduce or favour lax manners. How wary and how firm the just must prove themselves if they would escape so many snares! If they are wary and firm, and true to their principles, they will not be deceived nor overcome. The Angels of God will watch over them, and religion will be their shield. God says by His Prophet: 'I will break all the horns of sinners: but the horns of the just shall be exalted' (Ps. lxxiv. 11). He will triumph in the just.

Devout Christian, be not scandalized if the oppression of the just continues even during a protracted period, for the righteousness of their cause will yet assert itself, and their oppressors shall be overthrown. Pray for grace not to fall a victim to the insidious snares of a perverted society. Guard your heart and your senses. Let no evil find an avenue by which to reach your soul.

III. In the battle of justice and religion against the various forces of evil and irreligion, every individual soul is made the object of attack. These forces gather round it, as did Joseph's brethren round him when they said: 'Behold the dreamer cometh. Come, let us kill him' (Gen. xxxvii. 19, 20). Satan uses his wiles and snares, and constantly besets the servant of God with temptations. Here, too, will God triumph. The individual soul is never alone, and is never left unsupported. 'He shall say to the Lord: Thou art my protector and my refuge.' God will hear him and reassure him: 'Thou shalt walk upon

the asp and the basilisk: and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon' (Ps. xc. 13). Temptations of many kinds may try God's servant, but grace will support him. His own friends may strive to lead him to neglect spiritual things, to abandon pious practices, and to give more time to worldly business or pleasure; but he will not be drawn away from what he rightly considers to be more profitable to himself. He will remember our Lord's words to Martha: 'But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her' (St. Luke x. 42). God Himself may sometimes seem to desert His servant, but this will not shake His servant's confidence. God even triumphs in every soul that loves Him.

Devout Christian, you are ever subject to assaults and to opposition. Be ever faithful to God, and He will never abandon you. Do not trust to yourself, but ever pray for patience and constancy. In the battle of life, which is the battle for eternity, place yourself under Mary's protection, and beg of her to obtain for you increased confidence in God's loving help. Say trustingly with David: 'The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?' (Ps. xxvi. 1).

October 1.

OUR HIGHEST INTERESTS.

I. CHRISTIANS should be eager to partake of the rich fruits resulting from the Incarnation and Redemption. They must seek these fruits, and by God's grace strive to render themselves worthy to partake of them. They are comforted by the assurance: 'Seek, and you shall find . . . he that seeketh, findeth' (St. Matt. vii. 7, 8). Man's highest interests are those which concern his spiritual welfare and his eternal salvation. No other interests should be allowed to stand in the way of these so far as to prevent what is necessary to meet their claims upon his attention and effort. The parable of the sower, as explained by our Lord Himself, teaches us the folly and perversity of men who neglect their spiritual and eternal interests. The devil, our Lord says, comes to some and uproots the heavenly doctrine from their heart, lest, believing, they should be saved. Men must hold the true faith, and carefully eschew all false doctrine. St. Paul says: 'As therefore you have received Jesus Christ the Lord, walk ye in Him. . . . Beware lest any man cheat you by philosophy, and vain deceit: according to the traditions of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ' (Col. ii. 6, 8). Our Lord further says that some men believe only for a while, and in time of temptation they fall away; while others, again, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit (St. Luke viii. 12-14).

Devout Christian, pray that you may always have the grace to give the first place to your highest interests. Beware of being too far engrossed with the passing cares and pleasures of this life.

II. Our Lord invites us to the fountain of His grace,

saying: 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink' (St. John vii. 37). Let us paraphrase this invitation. Believe in Me (our Lord seems to say) with an unwavering and practical faith, not simply saying, 'Lord, Lord,' but doing My will, and fulfilling the conditions of salvation that I have laid down. Doing these things, you shall in this world receive at My hands all that is decreed by the wisdom and bounty of My providence for your well-being now and for your salvation hereafter. Come and slake your thirst at the fountains I have opened. 'All you that thirst, come to the waters' (Isa. lv. 1). Come and draw from the fountains of truth and grace the saving doctrine of My Gospel; come and imbibe at these fountains the spirit of My true disciples, and with a holy desire and confidence even demand the gift of the Holy Spirit Himself with His most precious gifts. At these fountains you shall draw, not only holy teaching, but also spiritual strength and refreshment to bring you safe on the way to eternal life, where they who drink shall never thirst again, and where all your holy desires shall be satisfied overflowingly (see Isa. xlix. 10).

Devout Christian, attend to this loving invitation. Our Lord wishes to make you a partaker of the spiritual blessings which He has merited for His followers and for all mankind. Alas! many men foolishly turn their minds exclusively to other pursuits. Be ever eager for your highest interests. This need not interfere with a reasonable care for your worldly concerns.

III. Our Lord, then, invites us to drink at the fountains of His grace if we would satisfy the longings of our soul. The world was never meant to satisfy these longings. Devout persons find this world a barren desert. The world cannot offer them what will satisfy their thirst. David exclaimed: 'O God . . . for Thee my soul hath thirsted . . . in a desert land, and where there is no way and no water' (Ps. lxii.). Worldly minded and irreligious men try to slake their thirst at the insipid and even at the poisonous streams that are found in the ways of life, and, alas! experience seems not to teach them any lesson; for,

although they drink unceasingly at these unwholesome streams, the thirst of their souls is not satiated. The Prophet said: 'You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains' (Isa. xii. 3). If we go to our Lord, He will give our soul to drink of the untainted fountain of living water, which is Divine grace. Then not only will the eager longings of our soul be satisfied, but our soul will also come to feel disrelish for the empty, as well as for the sinful, pleasures which so often prove disastrous to the weak. Such pleasures ensnare many souls, and cause them to neglect the duties of religion and to go in the path of spiritual ruin.

Devout Christian, our Lord in His love for you invites you to avoid every snare that would take off your attention from pursuing your highest interests. If you drink at the Divine fountains of truth and grace, you will love what is wise and profitable; you will love religion, virtue, and duty, and your soul will be drawn by holy desires in the way of a devout life. Pray to Mary, the 'Mirror of Justice,' to obtain for you a zeal for your best interests, and constancy in seeking to please God.

October 2.

OUR GUARDIAN ANGEL.

I. CHRISTIANS should be much comforted by the thought of there being appointed to guard and protect them a bright Angel, a citizen of the heavenly kingdom. David says to the man who trusts in God: 'He hath given His Angels charge over thee: to keep thee in all thy ways' (Ps. xc. 11). Thus was it also with the people of Israel when God had delivered them from the bondage of Egypt; for He said to them: 'Behold I will send My Angel, who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared. Take notice of him, and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned: for he will not forgive when thou hast sinned, and My Name is in him' (Exod. xxiii. 20, 21). St. Bernard asks why we should fear, seeing that our Guardian Angels are faithful, prudent, and powerful. Their presence with us indicates especially three things—namely, God's loving providence for our welfare, man's exalted dignity, and his high destiny. Let Christians be comforted not only by the thought of their Angel's presence with them at all times, but also by the thought of what their Angels do for them; for they watch over their spiritual and temporal welfare, they obtain for them many blessings, and they avert many dangers.

Devout Christian, how happy you should be to be already associated with at least one of the heavenly spirits! Address yourself every day to your Guardian Angel, and beg his care and protection. Praise the loving goodness of God, Who has appointed him to watch over you.

II. God's love of us and His providence for our welfare should be evident to us from the countless spiritual and temporal blessings lavished upon us. Among these blessings is the appointment of Angels to be our guardians. St.

Paul asks: 'Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them, who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?' (Heb. i. 14). Holy David says: 'The Angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear Him: and shall deliver them. . . . Fear the Lord, all ye His Saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him' (Ps. xxxiii. 8, 10). We may ask ourselves if God would send His Angels to watch over us if He did not love us. And owning our lowliness, we may say to our Heavenly Father in the words of David: 'What is man that Thou art mindful of him?' (Ps. viii. 5). Our Guardian Angel represents God, Who has sent him, and it is his office to carry out the dispensations of Divine Providence in our regard. When Daniel had been preserved from death in the den of lions, he declared to King Darius that this favour was owing to God's special providence through an Angel: 'My God hath sent His Angel, and hath shut up the mouths of the lions, and they have not hurt me' (Dan. vi. 22). By the same agency was St. Peter also delivered when he was in prison between guards, and bound by two chains; for we read: 'Behold an Angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shined in the room; and he, striking Peter on the side, raised him up, saying: Arise quickly' (Acts xii. 7). Happy, then, are all God's servants, seeing how wonderful and consoling are the ways of His love.

Devout Christian, ever fear and love God, that you may enjoy His special protection. His Angel will keep you in all your ways. Be filled, therefore, with confidence, and in this imitate Judith. When her daring enterprise had been accomplished, she declared: 'As the same Lord liveth, His Angel hath been my keeper, both going hence and abiding there, and returning from thence hither' (Judith xiii. 20).

III. Seeing that the Angels of God are told off to minister to man and to guard him, how great must be his dignity! Our Angels recognize that we are God's adopted children, bearing His image, redeemed by the precious Blood of His Son, and called to occupy thrones in Heaven. Would that Christians ever bore in mind their exalted dignity, and

that they ever respected it! Then would there be fewer sins and fewer scandals. Heaven and earth have been created for us, and the very Angels are placed at our service. How lofty, too, must man's destiny be, seeing that heavenly spirits guard him and protect him! When our Lord had set a child in the midst of the Apostles, He said to them: 'See that you despise not one of these little ones: for I say to you, that their Angels in Heaven always see the face of My Father, Who is in Heaven' (St. Matt. xviii. 10). A heavenly companion guides man to his heavenly destiny. Christians should value this providence of God's loving care; they should reverence their Guardian Angel, and respect his presence; they should invoke him, and they should obey his inspirations. Our Guardian Angel preserves us from many dangers, and he guards us from the consequences of our ignorance, weakness, and fickleness. He is especially our defender against the evil spirits, and he protects us from the snares of Satan. We therefore owe him a debt of gratitude, and he has a special claim to our love.

Devout Christian, reflect at times upon the kind services rendered you by your Angel, and upon the duty you owe him. Be further convinced of God's desire of your spiritual good and of your salvation, seeing that He sends His Angel to guard you. Pray to Mary, the Queen of Angels, to obtain for you grace to heed all heavenly inspirations, and to strive ever to live worthy of your exalted dignity and destiny.

October 3.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI—I.

I. St. Francis was the Founder of the Franciscan Order whose sons have edified the Church during seven centuries by their spirit of penance and by their apostolic zeal. It was said of the men of renown under the Old Dispensation: 'Their children for their sakes remain for ever: their seed and their glory shall not be forsaken. Their bodies are buried in peace, and their name liveth unto generation and generation. Let the people show forth their wisdom, and the Church declare their praise' (Ecclus. xliv. 13-15). Thus shall it be with St. Francis and his worthy sons. The Church honours St. Francis with two festival celebrations, and we should study his eminent sanctity, to proclaim our admiration, and to profit by the lessons it teaches. When St. Francis went to his reward it might be said that his soul was as the spirit of a very Seraph, while his body, worn out by mortification, was like that of an ill-used beast of burden. So if we fix our mental gaze upon his soul, we are carried to realms of love and supernatural operations far beyond our aspirations; and if we fix our eyes upon his emaciated body, we witness the evidences of an unsparing self-denial and severe discipline which we should fear to attempt. When he was in life, men who saw him and listened to his discourses could not but feel as if he would make them wholly heavenly, so unearthly was his life, and so spiritual his doctrine delivered with a persuasive unction that could not be withstood.

Devout Christian, desire a greater relish for what is spiritual. Thank God for raising up in the Church so great a Saint to help you by his holy example.

II. We date St. Francis's conversion to a more perfect life from his twenty-fourth year. From that time he

appears to us as a man eminently supernatural in the whole tenor of his life. It was no leading of the natural man which raised him to such exalted contemplation, and to such a ready and clear discernment of our Lord's teaching; nor was it the human spirit which moved him to such penitential austerity, for nature could not so far and so unmistakably go against itself. St. Francis was not instructed by human philosophy, nor deceived by any infernal delusion; he was led by a special guidance of Divine grace. Grace first breaks in upon us with its light, and when it has captivated our mind it wins our heart, too, and rules our conduct. Thus was it in the case of St. Francis. In what light did he grow up ? What a flood of attractive light fell upon his soul from the Gospel lessons, from the preaching of the Word, from the liturgical offices of Holy Church, from devout prayer, and from the lessons of the lives of the Saints ! The light of all these spiritual helps shone around him, and he was familiar with it. Then upon his conversion he sought to realize fully its benefit, and to walk by its guidance. We are therefore struck by the liveliness of his faith, and by his fidelity to its teachings.

Devout Christian, open your mind to the blessed and attractive light of the same teachings. Christ's followers must seek ever to walk in the supernatural light of His most perfect Gospel. Then will they not be misled by the spiritual ignorance and vain delusions of the natural man. Pray ever for light and heavenly guidance.

III. What an entrancing revelation the teachings of faith were to the mind of St. Francis ! That God created the world was not to him merely a necessary philosophical admission, but a grand truth claiming his acknowledgment at all times. To him God was everywhere and in everything. After the inspired canticle sung by the three Israelites in the fiery furnace, and after many verses in the psalms of David calling upon Nature to give praise to its Divine Author, what more touching rhapsodies do we meet with than the canticles of St. Francis addressed to all creatures—to the sun, moon, and stars, to the wind and air, to water and fire, and to the earth, all of which he styled

his brothers and sisters—praising God in their name ? God gave him a wonderful power over birds and animals, so that he could command them as he pleased. Then the mystery of the Incarnation was not less to him a revelation full of wonderful attraction, exciting his tenderest devotion. If he loved poverty so much, it was because of the love of that virtue which he witnessed in our Lord and in His holy Mother; and if he gave himself up to such mortification, it was because of the lessons of suffering which he learned from the mystery of our Lord's sacred Passion.

Devout Christian, admire St. Francis's practical faith, and how its lessons sank into his soul. The mysteries of Creation and Redemption have their teachings for you also, to captivate your mind, and to win your heart to God. Humble yourself, seeing how far removed you are from the sublime virtue of St. Francis. Commend yourself to Mary, and beg through her prayers grace to relish the things that are of God, and to desire to walk more perfectly in the path of a truly Christian life.

October 4.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI—II.

I. To St. Francis, owing to his simple and lively faith, revelation, which to so many is a sealed book or one but little understood, was a source of practical enlightenment, elevating and ennobling his understanding, inspiring him with energy and confidence in all his undertakings, filling his soul with a sweet peace, and causing him to love and praise God with seraphic fervour. Faith had thus, everywhere and at all times, its practical bearing upon his conduct. We cannot but note how fully St. Francis gave himself to the guidance of faith. With him there was no compromise, and there were no half-measures. When he saw a necessity in his fellow-man, he satisfied it to the utmost of his ability, as happened when he bestowed upon the needy even new and rich garments. There are also other instances of his whole-heartedness. When he wished to manifest his charity to men infected with leprosy, he mastered his own natural repugnances, and was not satisfied until he had kissed the affected parts. When he would profess poverty, he parted with his entire apparel, receiving instead, and then only as an alms or loan, the roughest garment. This he did not only when he first began to profess apostolic poverty, but also during the remainder of his life, and finally when about to die.

Devout Christian, learn from these considerations of the life of St. Francis to draw practical benefit from the instructive lessons of our Lord's teaching. Desire to show forth in your life the true character of a follower of our Lord. As St. Paul says, having put off the old man, ' put on the new man, who, according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth ' (Eph. iv. 24).

II. Consider other instances of St. Francis's whole-

heartedness. When he would practise detachment from the world, he bade adieu to his father, saying that thenceforth he would acknowledge as father only his Father Who was in Heaven. When he heard the Gospel injunction, 'Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff' (St. Matt. x. 10), he at once put himself to carry it out to the very letter. When he would practise obedience, although he was gifted with supernatural prudence, and even with prophecy, he would yet ask the youngest novice what he ought to do, and, having been told, he would then proceed to obey with great exactness. St. Francis would not tolerate half-heartedness in others; thus, when a young man who wished to join his Order was about to leave his worldly means to relatives who did not need them, the Saint refused to admit him; for, he said, the man who would not give to God his goods could not be counted upon to give Him himself. The soul that is captivated by Divine charity seeks God in prayer, and seeks also to do good, that thereby God may be glorified. Thus was it with St. Francis. Being so full of faith and animated with such fervour, he gave himself to prayer, and he was rewarded with supernatural favours in his devotions. He was, moreover, inspired with an ardent zeal for the glory of God, and for the salvation of souls.

Devout Christian, let the bright example of this great Saint animate you with zeal for your own sanctification, and fill you with a desire of glorifying God by works of piety and charity. Be whole-hearted in doing everything that God demands of you.

III. To prayer St. Francis joined mortification. Not content with his usual daily self-denial in all that concerned bodily nourishment, he every year kept very rigourously three Lents. Thus did he bring the body into subjection, and prepare his soul for those ecstasies of prayer which were so common to him. Not content with sending his spiritual sons in every direction to preach and to win souls to God, he himself, besides preaching continually, wished even to give his life for the religion of Jesus Christ.

He therefore sought martyrdom among the Mohammedans; but meeting only with honour and consideration at their hands, he returned to his brethren. Two years before his death, by a special Divine favour, he received the sacred stigmata, which brought him even bodily into closer resemblance to his Crucified Lord. After this he added to his other canticles one concerning Death. It ran as follows: 'Praised be the Lord for our sister Death (corporal death), which no man living can escape. Woe to him who dies in mortal sin! Happy those who repose in His most holy wills; the second death cannot reach them. Praise and bless my Lord; give Him thanks, and serve Him with a great humility.' He closed the touching scene of his holy death by reciting Psalm cxli., which ends with the verse: 'Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy Name: the just wait for me, until Thou reward me.' With these words on his dying lips, St. Francis passed away. The Holy Scriptures say: 'The just shall live for evermore: and their reward is with the Lord' (Wisd. v. 16). This great Saint, so poor and humble on earth, is now rich and honoured in Heaven.

Devout Christian, do not pamper the body, and do not love worldliness or riches. Follow faith's holy guidance, and be assiduous in prayer. Thus will you taste the sweet fruits of practical religiousness, and walk in the way of the Saints. Beseech Mary, your heavenly Mother, to obtain for you a wise love of what will be profitable to your soul, and grace ever to pursue the path that leads to Heaven.

October 5.

THE HOLY ROSARY—I.

I. In approving of prayers and devotions the Church seems to show preference for simple forms easily understood. This is seen especially in the long-used Litanies, and in her promoting the devotion known as the holy Rosary. As far as the holy Rosary is concerned, the wisdom of her choice is testified to by the Divine favours received through the practice of this devotion, and by the spread of piety which has resulted from it. The Rosary requires the use of, and repetition of, the best, simplest, and commonest prayers, and devout reflection on the most important events of our Lord's life. The pious use of this devotion keeps before our minds the great mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption; and while nourishing our faith, it also strengthens our hope of Divine mercy and of salvation, and it draws our hearts to love Jesus and Mary with real and practical affection. While with our lips we praise God, using the most acceptable forms of prayer, our minds contemplate holy and inspiring subjects, and we imbibe lessons most useful for our instruction, comfort, and guidance. When we consider the true character and usefulness of this devotion, it should not surprise us that its conception and institution have been attributed to our Blessed Lady herself.

Devout Christian, study what is required in the recitation of the holy Rosary, that you may understand how profitable this devotion should prove to you; and resolve to be devout and constant in practising it.

II. Tradition tells us that the Rosary had its origin in the days of St. Dominic, and that the Saint taught this devotion as an antidote against the Albigensian heresy, and to promote Christian faith and piety. It proved

eminently successful in both these respects; and the devotion itself began to be spread gradually throughout the Church. It has stood the test of ages; for seven hundred years men and women in the sanctuary and in the cloister, and devout Christians in the ordinary paths of life, have practised it. The holy Rosary has received the approbation—often renewed—of the Sovereign Pontiffs; and it has been in times of danger the spiritual weapon employed by the Church for the overthrow of her enemies. In days of persecution, too, when the true religion has been proscribed, it has proved a comfort to the faithful, and, as in Catholic Ireland, a means of preserving the faith and of practising religion. In these latter years we saw how the late Pope, Leo XIII., filled with sorrow and alarm on account of the ever-increasing spiritual evils of the times, invited all Catholics to recite every day during the month of October a part of the Rosary in order to supplicate God to correct and remove those evils. Well, then, does this devotion merit a conspicuous place in our religious practices, and many happy results may we expect if we recite our Rosary regularly and piously.

Devout Christian, see in what we have been considering clear evidence of God's blessing on the promotion of, and use of, this devotion. Herein, too, see another proof of God's favour towards the ever-blessed Virgin, and of His will that she should be honoured by the faithful.

III. How consoling and instructive are the pictures and reflections which the holy Rosary suggests! Our life on earth is made up of labours, cares, and sorrows. Under them we feel support when we turn our thoughts to Jesus and Mary. The holy Rosary leads us to reflect how our Lord became man, and lived on earth, sharing with His creatures the labours and cares of life; it then puts Him before us in His sacred sufferings and death; and, finally, it bids us to be reassured by the bright promises for our future that are contained in our Lord's Resurrection and Ascension, and in the entry into Heaven of His ever-blessed Mother. As we pass in review these various mysteries they should inspire us with fervour, comfort, and fortitude.

We may compare our light crosses with the heavy Cross of our Saviour; and looking upon the copious shedding of the precious Blood, we may call to mind St. Paul's words: 'You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin' (Heb. xii. 4). And, lest we should be carried away by the vain attractions and allurements of the world, or become weary of well-doing, we may take courage when contemplating the bright light of the heavenly glory into which Jesus and Mary have entered before us.

Devout Christian, love the holy Rosary, and beseech Mary to obtain for you the grace to draw heavenly lessons and consolations from its devout use. It should be a great help to your spiritual advancement.

October 6.

THE HOLY ROSARY—II.

I. The Church commemorates various victories over the enemies of Christendom in connection with the use of the Rosary. The institution of this devotion by St. Dominic dates from about A.D. 1208, and five years later Count Simon de Montfort, with only 25,000 men, overthrew the Albigensian heretics who were four times as numerous. Centuries later, while the faithful supplicated God and our Lady, using the holy Rosary, the Christian arms at various times gained signal victories over the Mohammedan forces that threatened to subjugate Christian countries.* The Sovereign Pontiffs instituted the festival of the holy Rosary to commemorate the Divine favours thus conferred upon the Church, and they have further striven to encourage the use of the Rosary by the faithful, enriching this devotion with precious indulgences. The Rosary becomes to the individual what it has proved to be to the Church at large—a stimulant to piety and a protection against danger; and the indulgences gained by its use make it a source of spiritual profit to the living, and of merciful suffrage in behalf of the faithful departed when the indulgences are applied to them.

Devout Christian, unite with the faithful in every land in practising this profitable devotion. You may then enjoy a special assurance of Mary's protection. How comforting, too, will it not be to your mind to fix your thoughts so often on the mysteries of our Saviour's love!

II. The pious use of the Rosary gives rise in the soul to those sentiments which constitute the truest and most

* The following signal victories are recorded: Lepanto (1571), Temesvar, Zentha (1697), Corfu (1710), Peterwardein (1716), and Belgrade (1717).

acceptable worship—namely, admiration, praise, gratitude, love, joy, and compassion. We admire the loving and bountiful ways of Divine Providence in the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption, and the virtues of Jesus and Mary displayed in the events commemorated in this devotion of the Rosary. We praise the Divine Goodness and merciful condescension displayed in these events. We thank our Lord for coming amongst us, for suffering and dying for us, and for triumphing for us over sin and death. We are moved by the Divine charity manifested in so many ways in the mysteries we contemplate, and we feel our hearts drawn by love to God. We rejoice in the blessings which our Lord brought to mankind, in the fruits of redemption purchased for us, and in the graces bestowed on Mary. And we compassionate our Lord in His cruel sufferings, and Mary in her sorrows, and we grieve that these sufferings of Jesus will be profitless in the case of so many who will be lost. These pious sentiments give value to our prayer, and they tend to bind our soul in effective union with God.

Devout Christian, give play to pious sentiments such as these when you recite your Rosary, and you will be more powerfully drawn to this devotion. Thus, too, will you offer pleasing worship to God.

III. Our reflections while reciting the holy Rosary will, among other subjects, fall upon the conduct and virtues of Jesus and Mary in the scenes we contemplate. How profitable these reflections should prove to us! The humility of Mary to which God had regard (St. Luke i. 48) is conspicuous in the events of the five Joyful Mysteries; but how shall we compare this with the humility of Jesus in becoming man, in the scenes of His childhood, and especially in those of His sacred Passion and Death? Mary's resignation to the Divine Will stamp her conduct in her whole life, even in the intensest of her sorrows; but what shall we say of our Lord's obedience? He was obedient to Mary and Joseph; He always accomplished—and accomplished fully—His Heavenly Father's will, 'becoming obedient unto death: even to the death of the Cross' (Phil. ii. 8). Other virtues of Jesus and Mary fall

equally under our observation and admiration, such as their charity, their patience, their meekness. Let us not look on with sterile admiration; let us desire to imitate them. Our Lord says: ' I have given you an example . . . so you do also ' (St. John xiii. 15).

Devout Christian, the mysteries of the holy Rosary furnish you with much matter for profitable and practical reflection. Try to learn something from them to bring you into closer likeness to Jesus and Mary. Ask of Mary to obtain for you by her prayers greater zeal for your advancement in virtue, and a more practical love of her Divine Son.

October 7.

THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY.

I. The considerations offered to us in the five Joyful Mysteries of the holy Rosary should fill us with comfort because displaying the wonders of God's love in the Incarnation of His Son; and they should also tend to support our soul in the trials and vicissitudes of our daily surroundings. The first of the Joyful Mysteries impresses our mind with Mary's greatness by reason of her virginal maternity. The long-expected time has arrived when the Saviour of the world is to appear. He is the Son of God, and He is to be given to us through Mary. God has becomingly fitted her for her sublime dignity. Admirable are her spotlessness, her humility, her obedience, and her piety. The Angel Gabriel comes to Mary with words of praise and blessing, and makes known to her the Divine designs. We reflect upon his declaration: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee;' and upon Mary's submission to the Divine decree: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to Thy word.' This mystery of Divine love and condescension is accomplished.

Devout Christian, ever rejoice in commemorating the Incarnation of the Son of God and the lifting up of Mary to the dignity of His Mother. Our Lord comes to embrace a condition of lowliness, poverty, labour, and hardship. Admire this evidence of His generous devotedness. Will you have no part with Him in these things? Offer yourself generously to embrace His holy will.

II. The second Joyful Mystery teaches us how we should respect, comfort, and help one another according as circumstances may offer. When Mary visits Elizabeth we witness other manifestations of the goodness of the Divine

dispensations, in the pleasure experienced by St. Elizabeth, in the sanctification of St. John the Baptist, and in the holy joy of St. Zachary. Zachary being dumb, we hear only the praises uttered by Elizabeth: 'Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.' Then Mary pours out her soul in prayer and prophecy, saying: 'My soul doth magnify the Lord.' The third Joyful Mystery brings us to the scene of the Nativity. Our Lord is born in a wretched stable, and is laid by Mary in a manger. We see Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as outcasts. But we are comforted when we hear the multitude of bright Angels praising God, and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace to men of good will.' We cast ourselves in spirit before our Infant Saviour, to worship Him, and to offer Him our love and service. We rejoice to see the holy shepherds and the Wise Men offering their homage. We wonder with them at the poverty in which the Son of God is born, and at the humble surroundings of so stupendous an event. Let all Christians submit resignedly to the arrangements of Divine Providence, for servants must not aim at being better provided for than their masters. Let all be content with their lot, even when they suffer from the vicissitudes of this present life.

Devout Christian, admire the peace and joy of Mary's soul revealed in her conduct in these two mysteries of the Visitation and the Nativity. Beseech our Lord to make you a partaker of the blessings He came to bestow on mankind. Thank Him for coming to share with His creatures their lot on earth.

III. In the fourth Joyful Mystery we contemplate Mary fulfilling the rites of legal purification, and, as High Priestess offering to God in His holy temple His own Divine Son. The words of the prophet are fulfilled: 'The Lord Whom you seek, and the Angel of the testament, Whom you desire, shall come to His temple' (Mal. iii. 1). Fresh joyful surprises meet Mary in the conduct and words of holy Simeon and of Anna. Simeon is ready now to yield his soul to God because his eyes have rested on God his Saviour; for 'he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that

he should not see death, before he had seen the Christ of the Lord' (St. Luke ii. 26). In the fifth Joyful Mystery we are once more in the Temple. Mary, after three days' search, is happy in finding our Lord. Her sorrow is changed into joy. She discovers Jesus discoursing with the wise men of the Law; and she notices with unspeakable gratification that all who heard Him 'were astonished at His wisdom and His answers.' Mary asks to understand the meaning of this mystery, only to receive in answer words which she kept in her heart, but which she did not then understand: 'I must be about My Father's business.' Jesus then obediently accompanied His Mother and St. Joseph, and departed for Nazareth. Our mind finally rests upon the scene of labour and retirement during eighteen years spent at Nazareth, where He 'was subject to them.' We may learn from the lessons of our Lord's early life to be content with little, to be devoted to the duties of our state of life, and to embrace labour as a necessary condition of our earthly existence. We should submit dutifully to the penalty imposed upon man: 'With labour and toil shalt thou eat . . . all the days of thy life' (Gen. iii. 17).

Devout Christian, be not of the number of those who wish to shirk all penalty, and to find this world a paradise. Love to study the lessons taught by the lives of man's highest models, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Ask Mary to obtain for you the grace to recite the holy Rosary profitably.

October 8.

THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY.

I. The considerations put before us in the five Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary should tend to inspire us with calmness, fortitude, and patience in time of sorrow or affliction, and under the burden of interior or exterior trials. In these Mysteries we reflect upon the scenes of our Divine Saviour's sufferings and death, and upon the lessons they teach. It did not satisfy God's love only to become man, and to embrace a life of retirement and toil: His love would further prove itself by sufferings and ignominy. In the first Sorrowful Mystery we see our Lord prostrate in prayer in the Garden of Olives. He is sad and fearful, and overwhelmed with interior anguish. His sacred Passion has begun. He is now the spotless Lamb of God preparing Himself for the sacrifice. He resigns Himself to His Heavenly Father's will to become the victim for man's salvation. To His disciples He has said: 'My soul is sorrowful even unto death'; and now praying to His Father, He says: 'My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' He knows all that is to befall Him, and He embraces with resignation the torments and the outrages that are before Him. By anticipation He even now in spirit suffers the anguish of them all as He lies prostrate under the burden of the sins of all men. In the meantime the fervour of His disciples has vanished, and their eyes are held fast in deep sleep.

Devout Christian, study with sympathy and tender commiseration the agony of your Saviour in this sad scene, and learn from it how you should resign yourself to the trials of your calling, and how you should seek strength and patience in fervent prayer.

II. Passing over the outrages offered to our Saviour at His apprehension, and in the houses of Annas and Caiphas, we come, in the second and third Sorrowful Mysteries, to the cruelties inflicted upon Him by Pilate's orders, or with his consent. David, picturing the afflictions of the just man, said: 'I have been scourged all the day: and my chastisement hath been in the morning' (Ps. lxxii. 14); but we are asked to look upon the very Son of God bound to the pillar of scourging, and most cruelly lacerated by wicked, unpitying soldiers, who ply their whips with brutal force upon His delicate flesh until His back and limbs are a mass of bleeding gashes. Our Lord utters no remonstrance, and bears silently the illegal, excessive barbarity. David speaks in His Name, saying: 'They rejoiced against Me, and came together: scourges were gathered together upon Me' (Ps. xxxiv. 15). A further picture of cruelty is put before us in the third Sorrowful Mystery. In this we see our Lord's sovereignty derided. A crown of long sharp thorns is prepared. He is crowned with it, and the thorns are driven into His head. A filthy purple robe is put on Him, and a reed is placed in His right hand. In this guise our Lord is brought before the people, and in their sight the soldiers spit on His sacred face, and bend the knee mockingly before Him. Our Lord is all meekness. But who shall say the sorrow that weighed upon His Sacred Heart at receiving such outrages from His own creatures whom He came to redeem?

Devout Christian, adore the bleeding Body of your Saviour now covered with painful wounds. Crown your heavenly King with a diadem of love, praise, and thanksgiving. Renew your sorrow for all your sins; for they were the thorns that pierced His brow.

III. The spectators of these scenes of cruelty are not yet satisfied. Their fiendish hate demands the death of our Saviour. From all sides comes the cry: 'Crucify Him.' Pilate at last yields. In the fourth Sorrowful Mystery we have the painful spectacle that drew tears from the eyes of certain women who beheld our Lord on His way to Calvary. We contemplate Him in a most exhausted state

carrying a heavy cross, and dragged and pushed along by inhuman soldiers; and we recall the incidents of that painful journey. In the fifth Sorrowful Mystery we look upon our Lord on the Cross and we see Him die. Sorrow and love well up in our hearts while we briefly consider the closing events of our Lord's sacred Passion during the three hours He hangs on the Cross. We see the outpouring of the precious blood; we behold the numberless wounds and bruises; we hear His own seven last words, and the blasphemies and derisions of the priests and spectators; and at last we hear His great cry and see His sacred head fall upon His breast. The Redeemer of mankind has accomplished His work of mercy.

Devout Christian, do not weary of contemplating these scenes of suffering, or of studying the lessons they teach. Every one of our Lord's sufferings was endured for your sake, to become to you a fountain of mercy, grace, and happiness. Ask Mary, the 'Mother of Sorrows,' to obtain for you a sincere devotion towards the sacred Passion, and the grace to accept dutifully the portion of suffering that is appointed for you.

October 9.

THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY.

I. The consideration of the happy events which are the subject of the glorious mysteries of the holy Rosary should lift our minds above all unworthy aims, and stimulate us to pursue higher purposes. It should induce us to lead lives more in keeping with our heavenly and eternal destiny. We consider in the first Glorious Mystery that the days of humiliation, suffering, and expiation are for ever past for our triumphant Saviour, and the Easter Day of victory has happily come. Our Lord may say in the words of David: 'I have slept and have taken my rest: and I have risen up' (Ps. iii. 6). He now fulfils His own prophecy: 'The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: and they shall kill Him, and the third day He shall rise again' (St. Matt. xvii. 21, 22). The machinations of His enemies are brought to naught; death and the tomb are triumphed over; Jesus arises in His beauty and in His power. He conceals, it is true, the brightness of His glory; but His holy Body has received all the endowments of a glorified body, and it will never suffer or die again. By His Resurrection our Lord proves Himself truly God, and He puts an indelible and irrefragable seal upon His work and teaching. We adore Him in His risen Being, while we take in at a glance all the comforting circumstances connected with the mystery of His resurrection.

Devout Christian, 'if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above. . . . Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth' (Col. iii. 1, 2). Do not permit any earthly attraction to come between you and your Saviour. Seek to partake in spirit with the holy witnesses of the resurrection in their sentiments of attachment to our Lord.

II. Another happy event is brought before us in the second Glorious Mystery. Our Lord finishes His triumph, and passes from earth to Heaven. This earth cannot retain Him. He rises above the thrones and kingdoms of the world. Ascending above the clouds and the firmament, He passes through the gates of Heaven, and sits down at the right hand of God, there to rule the heavens, the Angels, and the whole of creation, and to receive the homage and praise that are His everlasting portion and right. We witness the magnificent spectacle of this triumphant ascension, and note the rapturous wonderment of the Apostles. With them we 'desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ' (Phil. i. 23). In the third Glorious Mystery we rejoice to see how the fruits of our Lord's work are assured to us by the coming of the Holy Ghost. Our Lord, in fulfilment of His promise, proceeds to send the heavenly Comforter. On the day of Pentecost, with the sound of a mighty wind, the Holy Ghost descends upon Mary, and upon the Apostles and disciples, appearing over them under the visible form of parted tongues as of fire. This Divine Spirit comes to abide unceasingly with Christ's Church through all the vicissitudes of her existence until the end of all time. He will maintain her in immutable truth; He will give her increase; He will support her under her trials; He will defend her from all her enemies, visible and invisible; He will enrich her with heavenly gifts; and He will enable her to fulfil in every age her noble mission to mankind. We note the first-fruits of His coming in the extraordinary gifts bestowed upon the Apostles, and in the blessings which attended their labours.

Devout Christian, contemplate with joy and thanksgiving the events commemorated by these two Glorious Mysteries, which are so full of promise to you of heavenly blessings.

III. All the events under consideration in the thirteen mysteries of the holy Rosary which we have reviewed are taken from the records of Holy Scripture. The first two Gospels were most likely written before Mary died, and the four Gospels close their record at our Lord's Ascension.

We do not, therefore, look in them for mention of Mary after that event. We close the holy Rosary with two Glorious Mysteries concerning Mary, as we began it with considerations of her appointed place in the mystery of the Incarnation. Spotless Mary, the beloved Mother of Jesus, must depart for her reward. In the fourth Glorious Mystery we contemplate her death and her triumphant entry into Heaven. We have no words to describe the rapture of her soul, the beauty and glory of her being, and the august majesty of her bearing, as the Angels bear her to the throne her Divine Son has prepared for her. In the fifth Glorious Mystery we witness the operation of Divine bounty and love on the part of the Three Persons of the most Holy Trinity in bestowing on Mary the transcendent degree of glory decreed for her from all eternity, and the brilliant crown of her queenship entitling her to everlasting dominion and honour. Christians, by frequently reflecting upon these and the other Glorious Mysteries, should come to realize more fully the place they occupy in God's love and in His bounteous designs, and this should lead them to a higher tone of worship and to a holier standard of living.

Devout Christian, never lose sight of your heavenly calling and destiny. Pray to Mary to obtain for you a less worldly spirit and a more sincere desire of union with God, that your life may be 'hid with Christ in God' (Col. iii. 3).

October 10.

OUR LADY'S MATERNITY—I.

I. It was decreed from eternity that the Son of God should be born into this world of Mary, and that, therefore, wonderful and altogether extraordinary graces and privileges should be bestowed upon Mary to fit her to be the Mother of God. It may be said that her maternity is circumvented and adorned with these special Divine favours. There were graces to prepare her before the Incarnation took place. Holy Church, who presents her children with the full complement of Divine revelation, puts it before us with all its dogmas in exquisite relation one with another, and without any disjunction, confusion, or missing parts. We stand almost aghast when we learn that a creature is to be the Mother of the Divine Creator, and we ask how it shall be. Holy Church tells us that it is by the inscrutable designs of God, to whom nothing is impossible or difficult, and that He always adapts the means to the end, and that therefore there could not possibly be any grace or perfection wanting to Mary which her sublime dignity and calling demanded. Holy Church teaches us the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, and tells us that graces flowed in upon Mary's soul from the first moment of her creation.

Devout Christian, beware of the taint of heresy, with its unbelief, misconceptions, doubts, and denials, and look only to the Church to ascertain what are the truths of God's revelation. Rejoice in the piety and constancy of Catholics in honouring Mary's true dignity divinely given, and the privileges that accompany it.

II. God sanctified Mary's being in her Immaculate Conception, and at her birth and during her dwelling in the Temple rich graces were vouchsafed to her to enable her to sanctify her life. Her life was wholly for God, so that

no motive, intention, thought, word, desire, or action was ever independent of His will or opposed to the most perfect dutifulness in the accomplishment of that will. So faithfully did Mary correspond with the graces bestowed upon her during these early years of preparation that God declared through the Angel that she was 'full of grace.' We now reach a fresh stage of Mary's life. She is the purest of virgins, and now, without losing aught of her most perfect virginity, she is to become a mother. New and special graces are bestowed to fit her to be Mother of God Incarnate, and to enable her to fulfil the duties of her sublime dignity. How shall this mystery be accomplished? The Angel tells her: 'The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.' No such words were ever addressed to any creature except to Mary, nor were such wonderful things ever accomplished except in her case. Mary is now Virgin and Mother. Is it not demanded of us ever to honour this admirable object of God's choice and the works of the Most High in His dealings with Mary?

Devout Christian, ever proclaim with becoming piety and zeal God's predilection for Mary, and the bounteous dispensations of His providence in her regard. Thus will you obtain for yourself a fuller measure of the Divine bounty and of Mary's love and care.

III. Elizabeth, divinely enlightened, and 'filled with the Holy Ghost' (St. Luke i. 41), exclaimed: 'Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.' Mary has become the tabernacle of the Most High. This tabernacle is the very purest and the most richly adorned of all tabernacles, and it contains the greatest of all treasures. Now does there exist the truest of all relationships between God and the creature, the work of His hands. How wonderful that through a creature He should receive His being as man, and this in so inscrutable a manner that He should remain, without any addition and equally without any diminution, only the one indivisible Divine Person of God the Son! He, however, assumes His human nature through being conceived a man and

being born of Mary, and thus Mary becomes verily the Mother of God. O mystery of Divine wisdom, power, love, and condescension! Now is Mary exalted above every other creature, and her glory shall be, like that of her Divine Son, everlasting. It is not wonderful that Saints have gone into ecstasies of admiration and delight when they contemplated her exalted dignity as Mother of God.

Devout Christian, every 'Hail Mary' you recite reminds you of our Lady's Divine maternity. Let every 'Hail Mary' be also an act of veneration of your heavenly Mother, and of fervent gratitude to God for raising her to so unique and sublime a dignity. Beseech Mary to obtain for you grace to live ever united in the bonds of charity to her Divine Son, that you may happily realize the designs of His love in your regard.

October 11.

OUR LADY'S MATERNITY—II.

I. If we examine the general character of the relationships which Mary's maternity establishes with our Divine Saviour, we see, in the first place, that it raises her to a dignity corresponding, as far as it may in one who is only a creature, with the dignity of her Son. No dignity is, therefore, comparable with Mary's. Her Divine maternity essentially establishes her greatness; her relationship with her Son is the closest and truest that can possibly exist. Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, is in the Incarnation her Son, and she is His Mother. This relationship cannot be shared by Mary with anyone else, for by its very nature it is unique. It is a relationship inseparable from the Mother, and one that neither time nor any other circumstance can cause to lapse, or to be lost or destroyed. Mary is as truly our Lord's Mother now as she was when she brought Him forth to the world in Bethlehem, and she will ever be His Mother.

Devout Christian, respect and honour in Mary the sublime dignity which she enjoys by reason of her Divine maternity. What gifts and heavenly adornments must be hers! And how incomparable must be the measure of the Divine favour bestowed upon her! Rejoice because of her greatness.

II. We see, in the second place, that Mary's relationship with our Lord entitles her to authority and to receive honour, love, and submission. Our Lord recognized this. He ever loved, obeyed, and honoured His Mother. As an infant He received nourishment from Mary, and submitted Himself to her care. For long years He was subject to Mary at Nazareth. He honoured her by performing His

first miracle at her request. He raised her at her Assumption to the highest throne in Heaven, and to the very first and unique degree of glory and bliss. Moreover, He has given to her intercession the most complete favour and efficacy. Our Lord has also decreed that among all whom He has honoured and rewarded, Mary should stand out in the very first place in the honour which all His creatures and followers should render her. All generations shall call her blessed. God has made this decree, and it shall not pass away. Praised, then, be the Divine maternity of Mary, which entitles her to the love and respect of Jesus and of all creatures, whether in Heaven or on earth !

Devout Christian, do not deny Mary that loving worship to which she is entitled. Regret that you have not always been as devout towards her as you should have been. Resolve to strive to honour her in the future, ever guided by the directions and invitations of Holy Church.

III. Christians should delight to bear in mind that, besides the natural and miraculous maternity of Mary, she has also a spiritual maternity. If we are honoured in having God for our Heavenly Father, we should rejoice also in having Mary for our heavenly Mother. Our Lord said of those who should do good to all: 'Your reward shall be great, and you shall be sons of the Highest' (St. Luke vi. 35). He has, indeed, taught us all to address God as 'Our Father Who art in Heaven.' How comforting this is to us ! Our Lord has also made over to us His Mother to be ours. We find sweet comfort in this, too. What a privilege and what an honour to address by the affectionate title of Mother the very Mother of God our Saviour ! Let us be assured that our spiritual Mother is true to her charge, and let us, therefore, have constant recourse to Mary in our needs, trials, and difficulties. Her mother's love will reassure us when temptation tries us, and in the dark night of sorrow; and even the poor sinner may yet cling to hope while he is able to call upon Mary.

Devout Christian, recognize your dignity in being a child of this heavenly Mother. Be resolved not to dishonour this spiritual and holy relationship. Desire ever to imitate Jesus in His love of Mary. Offer yourself affectionately and respectfully to your heavenly Mother, and ask her never to deny you her maternal love or powerful patronage.

October 12.

OUR LADY'S MATERNITY—III.

I. Holy Church, in her office, says: 'Thy maternity, O Virgin Mother of God, has brought joy to the whole world; because out of thee has risen the Sun of Justice, Christ our Lord.' Mary's maternity has brought joy to all Christian maternities, for now children, after their natural birth, are admitted to supernatural regeneration, by which they become members of the great Christian family, and heirs of everlasting life. It, however, brought the greatest blessings of all to herself. These proceeded from her dignity as Mother of God, from her relations with her Divine Son, and from the character of her immense love of Him. The love a mother naturally has for her offspring is increased by the pleasing and attractive dispositions of her child. What, then, shall we say of the love of Mary for her Son, Whom she knew by faith to be the very Son of God? How precious to Jesus was the worship of His Mother's unrestrained love—a love so holy, so pure, so single, and so true! And how much that love sanctified Mary, for charity is the bountiful source of sanctification! The more we love God, the holier we become. Mary's love was the fulfilment of the law. It led her to the most perfect observance of God's commandments, and to the fullest compliance with the demands of His service. In return, she received the most copious flow of heavenly graces.

Devout Christian, rejoice in the blessings which result to mankind from Mary's Divine maternity, and in Mary's most perfect love of Jesus. Seek ever to advance in the love of God, that you may receive ever more abundantly the blessings of sanctification.

II. What lessons do we learn from Mary's control over her Divine Son? Jesus obeyed her, and was subject to

her. How perfect, then, must have been the nature of Mary's demands upon His compliance! In our Lord were two wills: the one the Divine will, an eternal will inseparable from His Divinity, and identical with the will of His Father; this will was never under control, but ever controlled all things. The other was His human will —a will ever and in all things conformable to His Divine will, and one which it was impossible for Him to subject to anything displeasing to God. Since He submitted this will to Mary's injunctions, it follows that those injunctions were ever pleasing to God. How sublime, too, was Mary's office in intimating her wishes to her Divine Son during the thirty years of His dwelling with her! Heaven presented no such spectacle, for there the mighty and glorious Angels are ever ministering around the Throne, executing the will of the Most High; but at Nazareth our Lord, the Son of the Most High, executed the will of His Mother. With what sublime awe, yet sweetness, and with what tenderness of maternal control, yet of worshipful love, Mary made known her wishes, combining authority with love and adoration.

Devout Christian, consider with loving regard your heavenly Mother in her relations with Jesus, and desire for yourself her gentle guidance. Let these considerations enhance your veneration for Mary and your desire of her maternal patronage.

III. Consider how Mary was true to her Divine Son to death and in death. Mother and Son were ever united in the bonds of mutual love in poverty, in exile, in labour, and in suffering. If Jesus was the Man of Sorrows, His Mother was the Mother of Dolours. The sword of trial pierced her soul. 'There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother' (St. John xix. 25). She was there to suffer with Him. She felt in her sensitive and sympathetic soul the pains endured by her Son. When Jesus died, Mary still stood there by the Cross. When His sacred Body was taken down, she received it. When it was entombed, she was there to perform the last loving services. What a noble example of ever-enduring devotedness her admirable

conduct furnishes! Let all rejoice and be consoled that Mary ever waited upon her Son with such love, devotedness, and constancy. Let all be animated with confidence in the help and protection of this their heavenly Mother. 'Hail Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners!'

Devout Christian, look ever to Mary in your needs and in your sorrows, and when death comes, count upon her powerful intercession. She knows the way to the sacred and most merciful Heart of her Son. Ask her now to obtain for you grace to be faithful to the service you owe to Jesus Christ, and never to fall away from His love. Finally, thank God for giving Mary to you to be your heavenly Patroness and Mother.

October 13.

ST. EDWARD.

I. Sanctity, which is the fruit of Divine grace, is met with in every sphere of life. Although the greater number of the Saints, whose revered names appear in the Church's calendar, belonged to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, or to religious Orders, there are also many others from every rank in society who have attained to eminent sanctity. Among the Saints of royal rank is St. Edward. He lived in times when often might seemed to decide the question of right, and when in his own country power was mostly on the side of Danish conquerors. For safety, as he was son of a Saxon King, he was transferred to the Norman Court. He was forty years of age before circumstances led to his succession to the English throne. Although exposed to the dangers which surround a Court, Edward by prayer and mortification escaped unscathed. He grew up in the practice of piety, and he used special care to guard the holy virtue of purity. His love of this holy virtue led him to make a vow of perpetual chastity. The Saint also cultivated meekness of spirit. The reputation of his virtuous life spread in his own country, which had been distracted by dissensions and political disturbances. When, therefore, the opportunity occurred, he was placed upon the throne of his ancestors.

Devout Christian, let the cultivation of virtue have its due prominent place in your constant efforts. It is a matter of greater importance to advance in humility, meekness, piety, and charity, and thus to stand well with God, than to accumulate riches and distinctions with the view of standing well with men.

II. St. Edward declared that he would not receive any crown at the cost of bloodshed, and happily his accession

to royalty was achieved by peaceful measures. He was hailed as King by acclamations on every side. He proved himself a model sovereign, both by his personal virtues and by his devotedness to the best interests of his people. He took care not to impose any unnecessary taxes upon the kingdom, and he met the expenses of the Court, and of many works for the good of religion, and in the cause of charity, out of the royal patrimony. In conformity with the representations made to him, Edward took a royal consort, but he was careful to select as his Queen a lady of marked virtue. His Queen lived with him as an affectionate sister, leaving him free to observe his vow of chastity. Edward made wise laws for his people, and he was ever vigilant over the administration of justice. Upon one occasion he even permitted his own Queen-Mother to be brought to trial, although he was convinced of the falsity and maliciousness of the charge made against her. Her innocence was vindicated in a miraculous manner, and the King did penance for having permitted the trial. Although incapable of vindictiveness, and ever ready to pardon offences offered to his own person, St. Edward ever maintained the dignity due to his throne, and he thus earned the respect of all classes of his people.

Devout Christian, learn from this Saint ever to satisfy the duties belonging to your state of life. So regulate your practices of piety that they may not clash with duties of the domestic and social order. God may be honoured by the orderly performance of these duties as well as by works of devotion.

III. In commutation of a vow by Edward to make a pilgrimage to Rome, the King was required to give to the poor as much money as the pilgrimage would have cost, and, further, to erect or to repair and to endow a monastery in honour of St. Peter. Edward thereupon repaired and endowed a monastery under St. Peter's patronage lying to the west of London. When the buildings were completed, the church at Westminster was dedicated with great solemnity. The pious King was seized with his last illness at the close of the ceremony.

He prepared himself with sentiments of great devotion for death. It is related that he had been forewarned of his approaching end by St. John the Evangelist, to whom he was particularly devout. Miraculous cures were effected at St. Edward's tomb, and within a century of his death he was canonized. The distractions necessitated by Edward's high office did not lessen his application to the pursuit of Christian virtue, and he became a model from whom all his subjects might take example. He edified his kingdom by his benevolence and piety. Endeared to his people during life, he was sincerely and universally regretted by them when he passed to his heavenly crown.

Devout Christian, if you study the ways of religiousness, you will not be less a good citizen because you are a true servant of God. Good King Edward, called the Confessor, was not less respected because he was faithful in fulfilling the duties of religion. Pray to Mary, the 'Mirror of Justice,' to obtain for you grace to be staunch and generous in all that concerns the service of God.

October 14.

PIETY.

I. When we speak of piety, we usually mean a filial and fervent devotedness in our service of God. To this devotedness are repugnant all evil courses, and all spiritual indifference and neglect of religion. The scope, however, of this kind of piety is not restricted to what has God immediately for object in worship and service, for it reaches also to dutifulness in affection and conduct towards our neighbour, this being commanded by God. What keeps men from true religiousness in God's service is hardness of heart, accompanied by self-indulgence, selfishness, and worldliness. Where piety reigns in the soul, the magnet which attracts the heart is not self or the world, but God. The heart of the pious is stirred by the claims of religion, duty, and charity; and the spirit of piety infuses into them an earnestness, a vigour, and a willingness which enable them to overcome all obstacles, and to use all the effort necessary to satisfy these claims. We may apply to piety what is written of wisdom: 'Wisdom inspireth life into her children, and protecteth them that seek after her, and will go before them in the way of justice' (Ecclus. iv. 12).

Devout Christian, cultivate this spirit of piety, which is so helpful to the soul. It will come to you in answer to prayer, and as a reward of fidelity to your religious duties. Those who neglect prayer and who are worldly-minded and self-indulgent will be strangers to piety, and they will offend God often.

II. Piety is a most valuable spiritual gift. It is bestowed upon the poorest and most illiterate of God's servants, as well as upon the talented and learned, and it is bestowed upon the faithful in every condition of life. In prayer it is a corrective of tediousness and distractedness, and it

inspires that devotion which gives to prayer a special value in God's sight. In the fulfilment of commercial and social duties it inspires men with motives acceptable to God, and it restrains men from excessive devotedness. In relations with the neighbour it prompts wise courses, and corrects inordinate affection. Piety leads men to practise the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and to rejoice in seeing good done by others. Piety may truly be said to be the seed of virtue, and at the same time it helps to plant, to nourish, and to fortify virtue in the souls of all who seek to please God. The religious institutes and the charitable institutions of every kind which are spread over the world are the outcome of piety. How precious and prolific must be the plant which has produced so many beautiful and fragrant flowers !

Devout Christian, judge of your own piety by its fruits. The Divine Master looks for the fruits of His gifts. It is written: 'Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit' (St. Matt. vii. 17). Strive to multiply the fruits for the heavenly harvest (St. John iv. 36).

III. Piety is a sign of predestination: the Saints were pious. Persuaded of its importance, parents and teachers should endeavour to inculcate piety in the children under their charge. Early impressions are lasting, and in tender years the mind and heart are more easily impressed, and character is more readily moulded than in later years. How many children, alas ! are brought up without any knowledge of religious practices, and without any zest for their own spiritual good ! How many men there are, too, who, because they are wanting in piety, are wanting also in the practical dread of sin with which they should be inspired, and, when they have fallen into sin, wanting in sincere sorrow for their sins ! It may be said that the absence of piety makes the chances of salvation less certain. In the case of young persons who have been well trained in piety, what cause for anxiety and misgiving there is when it is seen that they have abandoned their usual pious practices, and give disedification by their neglect of religion ! They should take warning from God's

message to Jerusalem, when His people had fallen away from observing the Law: 'Thou hast forsaken Me, saith the Lord, thou art gone backward: and I will stretch out My hand against thee, and I will destroy thee' (Jer. xv. 6).

Devout Christian, cling zealously to your religious practices, which are pleasing to God and helpful to your sanctification. Pray to Mary to obtain for you grace to persevere in piety, and to feel even the attractiveness of holiness.

October 15.

ST. TERESA.

I. The life and virtues of St. Teresa afford a profitable study for every class of Christians. Won early in life from a certain proclivity to vanity and worldly tastes, she advanced rapidly in spiritual knowledge and in religious virtues, and finally became a distinguished guide in the ways of prayer, and a reformer of rule in one of the oldest of the religious Orders in the Church. We see in this the efficacy of Divine grace when humbly and faithfully corresponded with. Signal and extraordinary graces were vouchsafed to St. Teresa, of which we should know nothing if she had not herself, in obedience to her spiritual director revealed them in her edifying and instructive writings. Led by the pious example of her parents, and moved by what she read in the lives of the Saints, she devoted herself in her earliest years to pious and charitable practices, and she gave evidence of a religiousness surpassing what is usually seen even in the most devout children. She wished for a martyr's crown, and she sought also to lead the life of a recluse. Losing her mother when herself only twelve years of age, being less carefully guarded, she acquired a taste for reading romances. This, and the society of a worldly-minded companion, caused her piety to diminish, and she came to esteem various worldly vanities.

Devout Christian, recognize that piety needs to be both fostered and guarded. Avoid unprofitable companionship and frivolous occupations.

II. The temporary aberration from her previous religious behaviour was corrected by a wise provision made by her father, who placed her for a year and a half in a convent. Recovering later from a serious illness, and instructed by religious books placed in her hands, St. Teresa thought

seriously of entering the religious state. She finally entered the Carmelite Convent at Avila, and therein made her religious profession at the age of twenty years (A.D. 1534). She was once more tried by a severe illness which lasted during three years. After her recovery she was guilty of some laxity in religious observance, owing to her finding pleasure in receiving visits from secular persons. Our Lord Himself deigned to reveal to her His displeasure at her conduct; and after a while, but not without some relapses, St. Teresa corrected herself. The personal character of this great Saint, which was one of eminent candour, despising human respect, and of singular earnestness, joined with her constant fidelity to prayer, rendered her soul amenable to the operations of grace. Our Lord waited patiently for this chosen Spouse; and at length St. Teresa, sensible of her imperfections, which her custom of prayer laid bare to her keen perception, gave herself whole-heartedly to God, desiring always, and only, to do and to bear all things with a view to please to the utmost her Divine Spouse.

Devout Christian, be not altogether discouraged if you fall at times into imperfections and lesser sins. By perseverance in prayer, and by humble repentance, you may see what is wanting in you, and you may yet advance in perfection.

III. God called St. Teresa to operate a reform in the Carmelite Order. This important work was not carried out without opposition; but our Lord comforted and directed His servant, and inspired her Superiors with a right understanding of the necessity of abetting the work of reform. Before her death, sixteen nunneries and fourteen convents of Carmelite Friars of the Reformed Order had been founded. What, however, is most to be admired in this great Saint is her eminent virtue. She loved intensely poverty, humility, mortification, obedience, chastity, and charity. These virtues shone forth in her own life and she sought to inspire with a love of them the souls confided to her care in her reformed houses. The saying 'To suffer or to die' reveals her desire of imitating her Divine Spouse in His life of suffering. Although favoured beyond most

of the Saints with ecstasies and revelations, she ever held herself to be altogether unworthy of any heavenly consolation. By her sweetness, humility, and disinterestedness, she succeeded in winning over persons most opposed to her rule. Secretly, in the midst of her labours and trials, she ever sighed for union with her heavenly Spouse. This was consummated in her sixty-eighth year.

Devout Christian, study the life of this chosen friend of Christ. Let no earthly distractions extinguish your heavenly desires. Pray to Mary, the Queen of all Saints, to obtain for you the grace ever to place God before you in all you do.

October 16.

RASH JUDGMENT.

I. Our susceptibilities are affected not only by our neighbour's conduct towards us, but also by his opinion of us, and by his judgment of our doings. Charity requires that, in our dealings with him in return, we should be considerate and kind, not only in our exterior behaviour, but also in our words and thoughts. There are often faults, in regard of charity, through unfavourable judgments, arrived at without sufficient grounds, owing to antipathy or to too great a readiness to judge the neighbour unfavourably. In these cases the sin is one of rash judgment. Rash judgments are often unjust as well as uncharitable. Charity demands that we should be always prepared to think and judge favourably of our neighbour. Even men who are in other respects careful to avoid sin, fall at times into this fault of rash judgment. So far do some men go in this kind of faultiness that they misconstrue everything, even the good actions of their neighbour. Men who do this may be evil-minded, and they are perhaps more at fault than the neighbour whom they possibly misjudge. Often, when men cannot condemn the action of their neighbour, they condemn his motive. It is very wrong to attribute unworthy motives when grounds for so doing are insufficient. Rash and unkind suspicions and judgments of our neighbour not only are caused by uncharitableness on our part, but they also lead to uncharitableness in our sentiments, speech, and conduct in his regard. Even when he is known to be actually at fault, we should be careful not to attribute excessive blame, not to be over-censorious, and not to deem that therefore he is wrong in every respect. We must still exercise charity towards him. Let us at the same time remember our own weakness and faultiness.

Devout Christian, when tempted to judge unfavourably of your neighbour, recall our Lord's words, when a woman was accused before Him of adultery: 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her' (St. John viii. 7). What will it profit you to think evil of your neighbour?

II. When we judge our neighbour rashly, do we not see that very likely our judgment is warped by our 'likes and dislikes'—in other words, by the leaning of our affections? Do we not think well of those whom we love, and deem that what they do is right? But this is not the case when we dislike anyone. Now charity must be universal, and we must judge everyone in a charitable manner. It is contrary to the charity we owe our neighbour to pass over all that is good in him, and to search out what is faulty. In keeping with such uncharitableness is the coming rashly to unfavourable conclusions in judging of his conduct. Our fault in so doing does not always remain with ourselves; for we often make others acquainted with our opinions of our neighbour, and thus we may cause others to think unkindly of him. We may ask ourselves if we are justified, by full knowledge of the case and by competence to adjudge it, to form a correct judgment concerning our neighbour's actions. May it not happen that our neighbour is a man of greater virtue and nobler character than ourselves, and blessed by God with a fuller measure of grace than ourselves? Should not therefore prudence, as well as charity, cause us to hesitate before passing judgment on him? Men may easily come to wrong conclusions when dealing with characters and qualities above the level of their own. Let us be humble, and judge rather ourselves than others. St. Paul asks: 'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own lord he standeth or falleth' (Rom. xiv. 4). If we think humbly of ourselves, we shall not easily fall into the error of becoming without any warrant judges of our neighbour. Let us examine the grounds and scope of our jurisdiction before we proceed to judgment.

Devout Christian, remember that God sees your heart, and knows how far charity towards your neighbour reigns therein. Let no bitterness or antipathy, and no unjust prejudice, rule your judgment of your neighbour's conduct. Recall our Lord's words: 'Judge not, that you may not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again' (St. Matt. vii. 1, 2).

III. Our Lord found fault with the Pharisees, not only

for their hypocrisy and insincerity, but also for their unfavourable judgment of their neighbour (St. Luke xviii.11). Without sufficient grounds they judged their neighbours as guilty of many faults, and they therefore deemed themselves superior to them. Is not this the conduct also of men who judge their neighbour rashly? They form their opinions upon the reports that reach them. They do not examine the grounds for these reports. Are the reporters always trustworthy? Are they not biassed by ill-will or prejudice? For why do they carry reports unfavourable to their neighbour? May not the report convey an exaggerated and one-sided account of what occurred? Should not charity make them wary of accepting the report, and of forming their judgment upon it? Our Lord and many of the Saints suffered condemnation upon false and unjust reports. Let us willingly receive and believe whatever good may be reported of our neighbour, but let us mistrust what is said against him, and let us suspend our judgment. Even when we see in our neighbour's conduct what appears reprehensible, charity requires that we should, if possible, attribute a good motive or some error of judgment, and that we should seek some satisfactory explanation of it. If we were to act otherwise, and condemn our neighbour without examination, we should expose ourselves to coming to a wrong judgment; and this would be to judge rashly. Virtue at times wears various disguises, and we may not detect them. Appearances, we know, are often deceptive; and a good motive may have prompted an action which, at worst, resulted from an error of judgment. Let charity, prudence, and justice guide us, and we shall not willingly form unfavourable judgments of our neighbour.

Devout Christian, strive ever to put a favourable construction on what you hear of your neighbour, or see in his conduct. It would be better to err in this way than to run the risk of misjudging him in attributing to him anything sinful or unworthy. Be lenient, even when you are bound to condemn him. Ask Mary, the heavenly Mother of us all, to obtain for you grace to overcome your natural predilections and prejudices, and to follow the dictates of charity.

October 17.

OUR LADY'S PURITY.

I. In the Litany of Loreto we invoke our Lady by several titles that testify to our firm belief in her spotlessness, and to our admiration of it. We address her as Mother most pure, most chaste, inviolate, and undefiled. Mary is the gem without blemish in creation. To her we apply the words of the Canticles: 'One is My dove, My perfect one' . . . 'Thou art all fair and there is not a spot in thee' . . . 'As the lily among the thorns, so is My love among the daughters.' We perhaps content ourselves with reckoning purity as freedom from blemish; but Mary's was more than this. Hers was the highest degree of the virtue possible in any creature. Let all Christians detest impurity even to its very shadow. Let it not be so much as mentioned among them. How great the vice is! It corrupts and debases man; it lessens or drives away all religious feeling. How disastrous are the results of this vice, and how vile the tyranny it establishes! It blights life, and brings men to their everlasting ruin. When there is question of anything opposed to holy purity, men cannot be too delicate in their conduct, nor too severe in the measures they observe. If they are strictly pure in thought and desire, they will not easily offend in word or act.

Devout Christian, admire the spotless purity of Mary, and commit the guardianship of your purity to her. Let no deception, nor unguardedness, nor vain curiosity lead you to depart from a holy strictness in all that concerns this delicate and exquisite virtue.

II. Besides the purity we have been considering, there is also purity of soul or cleanness from the defilement of any sin. Mary's soul ever shone with the lustre of heavenly grace, undimmed by the least shadow of any sin, original or

personal. Let us praise God for this bounteous dispensation in her regard, and rejoice that from this earth of ours there was offered to Him a worship more acceptable even than that which He receives from the purest of the Angels—Mary's worship was such, for she was and is the purest of all God's creatures. Christians are called to purity of body and soul. The grace of Baptism frees them from every stain of sin, and other means of grace are available for them during the whole course of their life. The priest says to the baptized person: 'Receive this white garment, and see that thou carry it without stain before the judgment-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Happy are they who ever strive against sin; happy they who love the holy way of grace and virtue. David says: 'Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord'; and our Lord says: 'Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.' Christians should understand the nature and requirements of their obligations. There are among them some who would seem to deem it wonderful if a man leads a truly Christian life. Shame upon such!

Devout Christian, lament sincerely the faults by which you have at any time defiled your soul; and pray for grace to avoid every kind of sin. Admire Mary's unexampled purity of soul. Strive for holiness of life through the help of her powerful intercession and through a practical devotion to her. 'Approve the better things, that you may be sincere and without offence unto the day of Christ' (Phil. i. 10).

III. Purity of life and the devout service of God are attended by a threefold blessing. In the first place they are accompanied by the blessing of God's grace and special providence. Solomon says: 'He that is good shall draw grace from the Lord' (Prov. xii. 2); and the holy writer says: 'The eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear Him, He is their powerful protector, and strong stay' (Ecclus. xxxiv. 19). While the wicked run to empty cisterns, the just satisfy their thirst at refreshing fountains. In the second place, those who avoid the ways of sin enjoy the blessing of a good conscience. Thus we hear Job exclaim:

'My justification, which I have begun to hold, I will not forsake: for my heart doth not reprehend me in all my life' (Job xxvii. 6). The wicked, even when they feign exterior joyousness, have a torment within; for a guilty conscience destroys peace. The just, even in their trials, are comforted by the peaceful condition of their conscience. If they have not offended God, other considerations do not disturb them. In the third place, men who aim at purity of body and soul enjoy the blessing of a well-founded hope of their salvation. David asks: 'Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord: or who shall stand in His holy place?' and he answers: 'The innocent in hands, and clean of heart' (Ps. xxiii. 3, 4). The wicked are full of misgiving about the future, and they do not willingly think of it; but the just live in joyous expectation, and are comforted in their afflictions by the thought of the heavenly reward.

Devout Christian, never seek your gratification in what is unwise or evil; but ever love the things that are pleasing to God, that this threefold blessing may be yours. Pray to Mary to inspire you with wisdom and piety in all your pursuits and desires, that you may never depart from the path of God's holy law. Consecrate to her the purity of your heart.

October 18.

DOING GOD'S WILL.

I. THERE is no truer test of holiness than the love of God's will and a perfect submission to God's ordainments. In many places in the Holy Scriptures we find promises of life everlasting and of Heaven attached to the accomplishment of God's will. St. John says: 'The world passeth away and the concupiscence thereof. But he that doth the will of God abideth for ever' (1 St. John ii. 17). We should be devoted to God's will, because it is always wise and perfect, and it ordains all things for the best. Man's will often turns from what is good and profitable; and even in doing good, it is not to be relied upon to persevere, for often men begin well, but desist, and end ill. God's sovereign and most perfect will should be the law of our life. The first shadow of evil falls on the soul when a man is so disposed as not to wish to do God's will. On the other hand, the keynote of perfection has been struck when a man, in all circumstances, desires only to accomplish God's will. Even works of religion done without reference to God, but only to please ourselves, will not be meritorious in God's eyes; for our Lord has said: 'Not everyone that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the will of My Father Who is in Heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven' (St. Matt. vii. 21).

Devout Christian, recognize the absolute importance of ever submitting to God's will. Resolve generously to embrace readily all God's appointments in the various circumstances of life. Resolve that, with God's grace, when once you understand what God wills, you will strive faithfully to accomplish it.

II. Man's perversity is seen in his not wishing to know

what God's will is, and in not heeding even when he knows what God demands of him. The truth is that our will is ennobled when it is brought into conformity with the Divine will, and only then do our actions receive the true stamp of rectitude. We conform with the Divine will when we faithfully observe God's Commandments, when we follow God's inspirations, when we seek in all we do to be guided by a right sense of what will be pleasing to God, and when we submit dutifully to the dispensations of Divine Providence. How desirable for our perfection, happiness, and peace it is that we should act with this conformity! If we do so act, then shall we be comforted by our Lord's words which were addressed to His disciples: 'Behold My mother and My brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of My Father, that is in Heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother' (St. Matt. xii. 49, 50). All men without exception should wish to merit this tender consideration of their Lord and Master. But how few are the men who think of asking themselves if they are leading a life such as God wishes them to lead! And how few are truly patient when by God's dispensation afflictions come to try them!

Devout Christian, make it your happiness to submit your will in joy and in sorrow, in prosperity and in adversity, to God's holy dispensations. Remember Tobias, who in his afflictions prayed, saying: 'O Lord, do with me according to Thy will' (Tob. iii. 6). Pray therefore with David, saying: 'Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God' (Ps. cxlii. 10).

III. Our Divine Lord, and the Saints, teach us to seek in all things to do God's will; and if we ask ourselves who are the reprobate in Hell, we must reply that they are God's creatures who have broken God's law and refused to do God's will. What a lesson this should be for us! Our Lord said of Himself: 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me' (St. John iv. 34; v. 30; vi. 38). We read in the Holy Scriptures how David, Judas Machabeus, and other servants of God consulted God before their enterprises; and from the same writings we learn how, when men

failed to do this, but acted on their own initiative, their enterprises failed (2 Par. xvi. 7). Mary was blessed because she said to God's Angel: 'Be it done to me according to thy word' (St. Luke i. 38). As to the wicked, they will eventually acknowledge their folly, and say: 'We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity . . . but the way of the Lord we have not known' (Wisd. v. 7). Too late will it be then to correct their perverse will. They shall then have to submit to God's will decreeing their eternal reprobation. Wise are those servants of God who, by willing submission to God's will now, merit to reign with God in Heaven throughout eternity.

Devout Christian, say in fervent prayer to your Heavenly Father what our Lord said to Him: 'Not what I will, but what Thou wilt' (St. Mark xiv. 36). In all you do, unite yourself in spirit to our Lord, to his Divine intentions and most holy dispositions, in accomplishing the will of His Father. Then, through His infinite merits, will your conformity with God's will prove to you a source of present and everlasting blessing. Ask Mary to obtain for you the rich grace of this holy conformity at all times.

October 19.

LIVING UP TO THE CHRISTIAN'S STANDARD.

I. A RULE of life has been given to Christ's followers; but how few men there are who study it and seek to live up to it! There is a Christian standard of living, and this, considering its Author and its object, should be known, esteemed, and followed by all the faithful. St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians: 'I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called. . . . Be ye therefore followers of God. . . . And walk in love. . . . Walk then as children of the light' (Eph. iv. 1; v. 1, 2, 8). To the Philippians he wrote: 'Be followers of me . . . and observe them who walk so as you have our Model' (Phil. iii. 17). As our Lord, Who is our Model, came on earth to take away the sins of the world, to lift up man from his fallen state, and to prepare him for everlasting life in Heaven, it must readily be admitted that, following our Lord's example and teaching, men should avoid the ways of evil and all those worldly ways which would keep them from rendering to God the service He, by every just claim, demands of them. Yet there are men who give little or no thought to these obligations, and who, if they do devote formally a short time to outward worship, seem to think that they are fully meeting God's claims to their service; such persons do not live up to the Christian's standard of living.

Devout Christian, be not among those who do as little as they can for God, but who yet expect from Him an everlasting reward. So live, rather, that you may be able to say with David: 'With my whole heart have I sought after Thee' (Ps. cxviii. 10).

II. It does not rest with everyone among us to fix the standard according to which he should live. Our Teacher and Chief Authority in this matter is our Lord Himself,

and He has appointed His Church to be our guide in faith and morals. The Church makes her laws for our spiritual benefit, and she explains to us the requirements of God's law, and the lessons taught by our Divine Lord. Our Lord insists upon our doing penance, upon our practising humility, meekness, and charity, upon our being as little children, upon our forgiving our enemies, upon our laying up treasure in Heaven, upon our denying ourselves, and upon our choosing the narrow way that leads to life. The Apostles who put in practice these heavenly lessons, taught them in their turn, and handed them down in the Church. They instructed the faithful to seek the things that are above, to have a constant mutual charity among themselves, to receive the Holy Sacraments, and to live ready for the great day of the Lord. St. Paul sums up much of this doctrine where he says: 'Be not conformed to this world: but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God' (Rom. xii. 2).

Devout Christian, while faithful yourself in your effort to sanctify life by the practice of religion and of the Christian virtues, strive also, according to your opportunities, to inculcate right principles of living in others. Give your heart generously to our Lord, and you will ever seek to be His true follower (Prov. xxiii. 26).

III. Those who are unwilling to learn from the Church what rule of life they should follow, if they would live up to the Christian standard, will be found also to disregard the injunctions found in the Gospels and Epistles. The independent spirit is fatal to receiving instruction; but it is a spirit which is widespread in these times. False liberty, religious indifference, and disregard of piety, keep men from experiencing the attraction of a truly Christian life. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at that the world presents a spectacle of so much worldliness and godlessness, and that the social evil becomes more intense and widespread. It is vain to expect that society will be lifted up, while men, leaving the true and holy ways of the century-tried Christianity, run now after the false philosophies,

the false religions, the social grandeur, the earthly satisfactions, and the loose and pernicious literature which are in demand in these times. There will be no true remedy for the social evil while the true religion is disregarded, and while men look to any other but the Christian standard to regulate the ways of life.

Devout Christian, happily you recognize the beauty of the Catholic faith, and the excellence of its teaching. Let it be your daily effort to live up to it. The path of holy living is traced for you, and grace is accorded you to enable you to follow it. Ask Mary to obtain for you grace to avoid all the snares and delusions prepared by your spiritual enemies, and to aim ever at the perfection of the Christian life.

October 20.

LIFE'S WARFARE.

I. DAWNING reason soon perceives that life is hampered with many restraints, and the battle between good and evil begins at an early stage in life. Men have to engage in this momentous conflict, the issue of which, under God's grace, will depend upon their efforts. The spiritual struggle goes on in the soul and in the Church. Our Lord said: 'I came not to send peace, but the sword' (St. Matt. x. 34). We must not shirk the contact; but, looking at it in its proper light, and recognizing its necessity, we must prepare for the fight, engage in it, and prosecute it valiantly and vigorously. On one side are the forces of evil, and on the other the true servants of God, banded together for all that is good. The forces of evil are whatever is opposed to true religion, to God's Church, to virtue, to holy living, to dutiful submission, to legitimate authority, and to mutual Christian consideration. Opposed to these forces are men who, guided by revelation and labouring for everlasting life, follow in the footsteps of Christ, His Apostles, and the Saints of every age, seeking to walk in humility, charity, piety, modesty, and patience. 'Against such there is no law' (Gal. v. 23).

Devout Christian, return humble thanks to God for His grace which has drawn you to the right side in this glorious conflict, and pray for a continuance of it. Be ever with Christ, with truth, justice, and charity.

II. When we study the dreadful character of the forces of evil, so disturbing to the Christian soul and to society, and so disastrous when they are victorious, we see good reason to fight the good fight. We shall not do this without three things: first, we must sincerely and constantly detest all that is evil, because it is displeasing to God, our

Sovereign Good; secondly, we must avoid the ways of evil, and we must not expose ourselves to evil attractions or influences; and thirdly, we must cling to the practices of religion and dutifully avail ourselves of the means of obtaining grace. What did St. Paul say to the Romans who had been brought into the Church? 'Let us cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light' (Rom. xiii. 12). There must not be any compromise with our spiritual enemies, and we must ever wear our spiritual armour; there must be vigour and watchfulness. Alas! that many men carry on a halting fight, and are often overcome. Alas! that others become weary of the struggle, and abandon the ways of piety. It is written: 'He that shall overcome and keep My works unto the end, I will give him power over the nations' (Apoc. ii. 26). If we would be victorious we must maintain our opposition to the forces of evil, and our Christian dutifulness even to the end of our life.

Devout Christian, beware of becoming callous in the warfare of life; there have fallen on the battlefield many who will never be crowned. Walk in the footsteps of the champions of the Cross of Christ, who in every age and in every sphere of life, have been distinguished for virtue and piety, and Christ will yet give you the crown of the victor.

III. The folly of men is often seen in this, that they do not give sufficient thought either to the contest which is going on, or to its momentous issues. Some men seem to realize these things only when death is at hand; then, moved to desperation at the prospect, they wish to make their peace with God Whose service they have neglected, and to enrol themselves, even at the last moment, in the number of His servants. We will not ask if grace and mercy will wait upon them in their sad plight; but we point out the folly of which they were guilty in not realizing during life and in every stage of their career God's claims upon their generous and constant love and service. We have not been given life to spend it in serving the world or in following our own waywardness, regardless of God's

demands upon us; but we have been placed in life to do our duty to God and to prepare ourselves for our eternal destiny in His kingdom. We have to fight for that kingdom, despising and overcoming all obstacles. Our Lord said: ' The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away ' (St. Matt. xi. 12). We may interpret these words as teaching us that without effort and struggle we may not expect to reach the heavenly crown. The effort and the struggle are not to be deferred until the uncertain time and circumstances of our death; it may then be too late, and the heavenly crown may be lost.

Devout Christian, all who would make their salvation secure must cling to the ways of grace, in spite of all opposition. Our Lord said: ' If anyone abide not in Me: he shall be cast forth ' (St. John xv. 6). Beseech Mary, your heavenly Protectress in the warfare of life, to obtain for you grace ever to abide in Christ, that you may belong to Him both in time and in eternity.

October 21.

OUR SERVICE OF GOD.

I. We are all under the most serious obligation of serving God in the manner He demands that we should serve Him. Many persons do not offer Him any service, and others pretend to serve Him according to their own ideas, irrespective of God's demands upon their service. Our guide and instructor is the Church, appointed to interpret for us the Divine Law and the observances laid down by our Blessed Lord (St. Matt. xxviii. 20). Satan and the world would dispute our service of God; but, with our Lord, we must say: 'Begone, Satan, for it is written, The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve' (St. Matt. iv. 10). Alas! that among the men, created, redeemed, and loved by God, who people the earth, there are so many millions who do not know Him; and, alas! that among those who do know Him there are millions who neglect His worship and break His law, and who serve the world and their own base passions! When will men be dutiful? When will they be wise? It is written: 'To know Thee is perfect justice: and to know Thy justice, and Thy power, is the root of immortality' (Wisd. xv. 3).

Devout Christian, make it your joy to please God in all your life, in things spiritual and temporal, in prosperity and adversity, and be assured that thus you will secure your present and future happiness.

II. When we reflect that we owe our being to God, the Creator of all that is, and that we depend entirely upon His providence for our present life and future well-being, should it not strike us that God should be the first object of our thoughts? He is our First Beginning and Last End. Should not the instincts of our faith lead us to turn to Him and to reverence, love, and obey Him, even as the

little child turns instinctively to its earthly father with dutiful feelings of respect, trust, and affection? Let our service of God manifest itself in prayer and worship, in using the means appointed to obtain His grace, in obedience to His law, in thanksgiving for His mercies, in submission to His appointments, and in zeal for His glory. God is indeed worthy of all this, and of infinitely more, and only this service can afford us true satisfaction. Out of God, we cannot find in any creature real contentment of spirit; but we find it in God, because He is Truth itself and because He is the only Sovereign and Everlasting Good, infinite in all perfections, worthy, therefore, to be ever the worshipful object of our faith, trust, love, and desires.

Devout Christian, deplore with sincere regret the indifference of men in their service of God. Renew frequently your determination, by God's grace, never to fall away from fervour in His service. Say with David: 'What have I in Heaven? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? . . . It is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God' (Ps. lxxii. 25, 28). Despise every allurement and temptation that might cause you to offend God.

III. The neglect of God's service is one of the saddest of men's sins, and it is yet one of which men seem to make least account. This neglect is evident proof of their disregard of the command to love God above all things, a duty of which our Lord declared: 'This is the greatest and the first commandment' (St. Matt. xxii. 38). This duty may not be neglected with impunity; no matter who we are, or what our position is, we all owe God our service, and we must therefore never do, say, think, or desire anything which would be opposed to this service. By their neglect of it many men bring about their condemnation. How many there are who find time for business, for social duties, and for amusement, but who are unwilling to find it for God's worship, for fulfilling their religious duties, for training their children in piety, and for performing works of charity for their neighbour! Let us remember St. Paul's warning and exhortation: 'What things a man shall

sow, those also shall he reap. . . . In doing good let us not fail. For in due time we shall reap, not failing' (Gal. vi. 8, 9). Those who sow in worldliness, disregarding godliness, will not reap the better things.

Devout Christian, ever view the duties of this present life in the light of the heavenly teaching of Christ and His holy Apostles. Your desires will then be lifted up above earthly things, and you will make it your joy to love and serve God. Pray to Mary to obtain for you grace to avoid all spiritual remissness and to rejoice in doing good.

October 22.

THE BENEFIT OF SERVING GOD.

I. God does not disregard the service of His creatures. The Angels who proved faithful to Him rejoice, and will ever rejoice, in the bliss and glory of Heaven. The just on earth have God for their Protector; He blesses them in many ways, and He comforts them with the promise of the heavenly rewards. Their service of God dispels alarm and the dread of God's judgments; it wins for them peace of conscience and many spiritual consolations, and it brings them under the guardianship of a special providence. When the Romans had 'become servants to God,' St. Paul told them what benefits should be theirs, saying: 'You have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end life everlasting' (Rom. vi. 22). Only God can bestow upon us the everlasting blessedness of His kingdom; how, then, shall we expect to attain to it if we refuse to be His servants? In the case of men who have not served God, if they die without repentance the dismal misgivings with which they witness the approach of death will be succeeded after death with everlasting woe; but of God's servant it is written: 'Blessed is the man whose trust is in the name of the Lord: and who hath not had regard to vanities, and lying follies' (Ps. xxxix. 5).

Devout Christian, ever serve the Divine Author of Creation, and He will bless you in your present life. His rich promises are for His servants. The holy writer says: 'Ye that fear the Lord believe Him: and your reward shall not be made void' (Ecclus. ii. 8). He will preserve you safe in the arms of His love and of His mercy.

II. There is no more exalted or happy service than that of God. While we serve Him we are associated with the blessed in Heaven and with the just on earth in the truest

and noblest worship; but men who refuse God the service He demands of them must be associated with the spirits of evil and with all the wicked. What real comfort, then, can they expect in this life, and what hope of heavenly and everlasting bliss can they entertain for the life to come? Miserable men, when will you turn from this path of baseness and ingratitude? The way of God's service may indeed be one of temporary tribulations and sorrows; but, for all that, it is the way of justice and peace. Let God's servants be comforted by the thought that there is no true greatness but in the coming forth unto the resurrection of life (St. John v. 29), and in pursuing the conduct which leads to this. There is, therefore, now true greatness in carrying the cross and in triumphing over evil. We shall never have anything to blush for in what God's service demands of us; but in serving the devil, the world, and the flesh, how many base things are done, of which the men who do them are afterwards ashamed!

Devout Christian, recognize only in God's service conduct that is truly honourable and irreproachable. Be reconciled to the passing trials which this holy service may impose upon you; but be convinced that in serving God you are at all times consulting and advancing your own best and eternal interests.

III. Everything in the service of God tends to our welfare. In it we strive ever to correct what is faulty in our conduct, and the lessons we learn and the graces we receive lift up our thoughts, affections, and aspirations. The service of God, therefore, tends to ennoble our character and to lead us onward in the ways of virtue and perfection. What other service offers such advantages and leads to such rewards? What shall the wicked and what shall deluded worldlings say at the Last Day? They will say: 'What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All these things are passed away like a shadow' (Wisd. v. 8, 9). 'For,' says the holy writer, 'the hope of the wicked is as dust, which is blown away with the wind. . . . But the just shall live for evermore: and their reward is with the Lord'

(Wisd. v. 15, 16). Our Judge will not ask us what money we made, or how we figured in the world of fashion, or how, by title or property, we stood in men's eyes; He will demand how we served God, and He will pronounce judgment accordingly. Let, then, no worldly gain or consideration, let no wile of Satan, let no inordinate affection or evil passion, lead us to offend God and abandon His service.

Devout Christian, rejoice always with the just and serve God with constancy. Your heavenly reward may be delayed, but it will be sure. The years of your exile will pass, with their joys and sorrows, and then will open to you the gates of the City of Peace with its everlasting rewards. Beseech Mary, your heavenly advocate, to watch over you with her motherly care and to obtain for you the grace ever to be devoted to God's service.

October 23.

THE RAISING OF FALLEN MAN.

I. By the sin of our first parents man fell, and his condition was irremediable save by God's own omnipotent hand. The remedy was to come through our Lord's Incarnation and Redemption, and fallen man was to be lifted up. As these mysteries grow upon our mind, with a perception ever more full and clear, at the same pace increases our admiration of God's infinite compassion and goodness. The assumption of our humanity by God the Son seems even to suppose a change in the unchanging and unchangeable existence of God Himself, and the opening of a new era in the Heaven of heavens. The mystery of redemption displays to our astonished gaze God made man, the Orient from on high visiting and redeeming His people (St. Luke i. 68), the Most High humbled as a servant, and even reputed a malefactor, and the very Author of life submitting to death. Our Lord came to raise up fallen man, and to break the bonds of his slavery. By obeying Satan, falling a victim to his wiles, man had become his bondsman, for St. Peter says: 'By whom a man is overcome, of the same also is he the slave' (2 St. Peter ii. 19). Man had also become the victim of base passions. He might therefore be described as under the yoke of Satan, and bound by the fetters of sin. St. John tells us why our Lord came: 'For this purpose the Son of God appeared, that He might destroy the works of Satan' (1 St. John iii. 8); and St. Paul says: 'In Him we have redemption through His Blood, the remission of sins' (Col. i. 14).

Devout Christian, rejoice in what our Lord has done so magnificently. He Himself said: 'If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed' (St. John viii. 36). Alas! that many men fall again under bondage by their disregard for Christ's holy discipline and commands! St.

Paul says: 'Stand fast, and be not held again under the yoke of bondage' (Gal. v. 1).

II. When man lost original justice, he fell into dishonour, and was deprived of his right, as the beloved child of God, to the heavenly inheritance. His fall carried with it disgrace. Our first parents were powerless to reinstate themselves in God's favour, or to restore to their race its lost dignity. Our Lord came to lift man up and to do this needed work of restoration. He came 'that He might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons' (Gal. iv. 5); 'that we should be called and should be the sons of God' (1 St. John iii. 1). With the loss of original justice, man suffered a multiform deprivation. He was despoiled of happiness, of the blessings of grace, and of many spiritual and intellectual gifts. Thus did his overthrow lead to a condition of want and misery. Happily, by our Lord's redemption, grace has been restored, and our soul has been adorned in a manner befitting our new condition. It is written: 'Nothing is wanting to you in any grace.' 'In all things you are made rich in Him' (1 Cor. i.). In many ways are now applied to our soul the fruits of our Redeemer's infinite merits, and we are made rich in grace, in knowledge, and in spiritual blessings. Great is the charity of His most Sacred Heart, which has made such abundant provision for our happiness and well-being. We may now look to the future with comfort and hope. Beyond the horizon of the present life is the heavenly inheritance. The bitterness of death is taken away by the joy of Christian hope; there is no lasting death for the just. We owe it to our Divine Redeemer that death leads to an incomparable triumph in a future glorious resurrection. 'They that have done good shall come forth unto the resurrection of life' (St. John v. 29).

Devout Christian, contemplate with satisfaction the undoing of fallen man's misery through the stupendous mystery of redemption. Pray that you may be ever faithful to grace, and never forfeit the blessings purchased so abundantly for you by the precious Blood.

III. It was said to man of old, when he had fallen: 'Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return' (Gen. iii. 19). Now he has been raised, and our loving Redeemer says: 'I appoint to you as My Father hath appointed to Me, a kingdom' (St. Luke xxii. 29). Into that kingdom He will gather His elect: 'The just shall go into life everlasting.' 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you' (St. Matt. xxv.). This will be the crowning of the work of raising fallen man. It is our duty to praise God with grateful hearts for this lifting up, which will end so gloriously. Alas! there are Christians who put on again the chains of their bondage, who cast away the precious garment of grace, and who walk in the way of everlasting death. Ah! let not any evil habit of sin rob us of the precious gains which our Saviour has won for us. Let not Satan, or the world, or any wicked passion bring us again into bondage. Let us be assiduous in prayer, and let us avail ourselves of the means of grace and of salvation. Sad and disastrous would it be if we were to love the darkness rather than the light, the ways of evil rather than the paths of justice, and if we were to set at naught the spiritual blessings which are vouchsafed to us to bring us to the heavenly reward. St. Paul says: 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' (Heb. ii. 3). Let us be true to the pledges of fidelity which we have so often given to God; let us guard and foster our own most important interests.

Devout Christian, be astonished, first at the Divine compassion, condescension, and goodness displayed in the mystery of man's redemption, and secondly at the ingratitude and folly of sinners who fail to correspond with God's merciful designs and remain in their sins. Bless God with unceasing praise for having delivered you from bondage and bought for you the holy freedom of the children of God. Ask Mary, the cherished Mother of our blessed Redeemer, to obtain for you grace to avoid your usual faults, and ever to aim at true piety of life.

October 24.

HOW TO DISPOSE OURSELVES FOR GOD'S BENEFITS.

I. We all need God's graces and other bounties. Some men receive more abundantly than others because they dispose themselves more properly to move the Divine Goodness in their regard. Two things should always enter into our preparation for grace and for the blessings we need —namely, the true desire of them, and prayer that they may be granted us. There are, however, means to be employed. We may move the Divine Bounty by humility, by correspondence with the graces received, and by a grateful spirit. God tells us by His prophet: 'I will pour out waters upon the thirsty ground' (Isa. xliv. 3); and our Lord bids us hunger and thirst after justice if we would have our fill. We must therefore thirst for the good things of God if we would receive them, and we must raise our voice in prayer, as did the lepers, the blind, and men otherwise afflicted, whom our Lord healed. David encourages us to do these things where he says: 'They that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good' (Ps. xxxiii. 11). Some men do not pray for anything; others pray only for temporal gifts; why will not all pray for spiritual health and healing, and for an increase of faith, hope, charity, and the moral virtues?

Devout Christian, dispose yourself for spiritual gifts by earnestly desiring them and by praying to receive them. God's ears are open to your prayers; pray, then, that He may grant your petitions.

II. God ever regards the humble: humility should, therefore, be regarded as a means to move the Divine Bounty in our favour. Mary said: 'He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid' (St. Luke i. 48); and St. James declared: 'God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble'

(St. James iv. 6). What, indeed, are we, and what have we of which to be proud, in the presence of God, Who alone is great, and from Whom all goodness proceeds? What attitude, therefore, so becomes us when we address our petitions to God, as one of the profoundest humility? And what attitude must necessarily be so displeasing to God as one of pride or self-sufficiency? God says by His Prophet: 'To whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My words?' (Isa. lxvi. 2). How necessary is humility when we are preparing ourselves to receive the Holy Sacraments! It is indispensable in contrition, and in confessing our sins, and in our faith and devotion in receiving Holy Communion. But the Sacraments are the channels of grace. What little fruit they will bring to our soul if we be not disposed by true humility to profit by them! Where, too, will be the fruits of a Christian life, and the outpouring of spiritual gifts by the Divine Bounty, if we be wanting in humility?

Devout Christian, be careful not to prevent the flow of God's bounties by pride. The true disciple of Christ is meek and humble. Such a follower is dear to the Sacred Heart, and he is enriched with special gifts and favours.

III. We dispose ourselves for fresh favours by turning to good account those we have received—in other words, correspondence with grace is a preparation for other graces. We must, therefore, be attentive to Divine inspirations, and heed the Divine warnings; then will God continue to speak to our soul. It is written: 'My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: that grace may be added to thy head, and a chain of gold to thy neck' (Prov. i. 8, 9). Yet more abundant graces will be bestowed upon us if we obey when it is God Who speaks to us and His law that we adhere to. On the other hand, how many souls remain poor and weak, how many lose grace, and how many are lost, because of Divine inspirations and warnings unheeded! Another means of disposing ourselves for God's favours is gratitude for those already conferred. We

should ever have a grateful heart, for we are continually experiencing the goodness of God's providence. David says: 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all He hath done for thee' (Ps. cii. 2). All the world condemns ingratitude in a man towards his fellow-man. What should be thought when it is a case of man's ingratitude towards God? But will not God accept and bless our tokens of gratitude, our hymns and prayers of grateful worship? Assuredly He will, and He will be moved to show us further favour.

Devout Christian, reflect upon these ways of disposing yourself to receive the Divine bounties, and see what your own conduct is. Pray to Mary to intercede for you with her Son to keep you ever in His favour, and to enrich your soul with His graces.

October 25.

HUMILITY.

I. CHRISTIAN humility is as the door opening upon the path of Christian perfection and of rich spiritual blessings. It is a virtue that restrains the soul from inordinate self-esteem, and from contempt and disregard of others. It is regulated by true self-knowledge and by the Gospel teaching; therefore, both by Christian philosophy and by supernatural religion; and it prevents us from assuming a false position with regard to ourselves or in our relations with our neighbour. It prevents the mind from seeking to exalt itself as though superior to what it really is, it restrains the tongue from vain boasting, and it moderates all exterior bearing and behaviour so as to check haughtiness and forwardness. This self-restraint and correct behaviour should have their foundation in religion—that is, in an acknowledgment of what we ourselves are before God, and of the relations which God wishes us to maintain in regard of our neighbour. Then will our humility be true, meritorious, and constant. The first step towards the acquisition of this virtue is to desire to be humble, the second step is to pray for the grace to be humble, and the third step is to strive to practise humility. There are men who take none of these steps, and who therefore fall into much faultiness and into many errors of conduct.

Devout Christian, do not deprive your soul of the countless blessings which the virtue of humility should bring you. By it you will triumph over your spiritual enemies, and escape many spiritual dangers. Pray for the grace of self-knowledge, which will help you to moderate your self-esteem, and pray that you may ever think of yourself and of others with a true and just consideration, and that you may not desire to exalt yourself over others.

II. When Christians truly appreciate their lowly condition they have to acknowledge that of themselves they have no merit, no virtue, and no grace, and that they owe it to God's grace that they are not debased and criminal. Humility leads them to think humbly of themselves and of their achievements, but not necessarily to think of themselves contrary to what is true. Christians who are humble do not wish to be appreciated beyond their strict deserts by others, and they are prepared even to be undervalued by others. They do not seek inordinately to be esteemed or praised by others, and, consequently, they do not lose their peace of mind when they meet with unjust disesteem. They remember always our Lord's words: 'Learn of Me, because I am meek, and humble of heart' (St. Matt. xi. 29); and they study humility of heart. They watch over their heart, lest it should be puffed up with pride and conceit, or with those angry or resentful feelings which proceed from injured pride. They do not seek to shine, or desire to be flattered, or to occupy the first place; and their humility, justice, and charity lead them to appreciate the good qualities of their neighbour. They love to learn lessons in humility and in other virtues seen in their neighbours. St. Paul says: 'In humility, let each one esteem others better than themselves' (Phil. ii. 3).

Devout Christian, you will never be truly humble if you are not humble in mind and in heart. Aim at interior humility. Say often: 'Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thy heart.' Humble yourself because of your weakness, fickleness, and spiritual disorders. The more you do this, the more acceptable will you be to God, and the more considerate will you be towards your neighbour.

III. The virtue of humility should be manifest, but without ostentation, in exterior conduct. Humility is wanting in persons who are haughty and inconsiderate in their relations with their neighbour, which should not be, even when he is of a lowlier estate, less intelligent, or less instructed than themselves. Such persons may give themselves an air of superiority, and show themselves offended

with little or no cause. An undue display of wealth, distinction, or talent also betrays an absence of humility. Humility is demanded in all Christians, in rich and poor, in learned and unlettered, and in young and old. None should put themselves forward, or speak much of themselves. When the Apostles strove among themselves as to who among them should be the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven, our Lord told them that they should not even enter into that kingdom if they did not become as little children. When our Lady declared the wonders of God's dealings with her, she explained it by saying that He had had regard to the humility of His handmaid. And our Lord said more than once that they who humble themselves shall be exalted. It is humility that renders our prayers acceptable to God, and obtains for us countless actual graces.

Devout Christian, let no false ideas concerning your dignity, talents, or achievements rob you of this excellent virtue. You are of the same flesh and blood as others, and of the same stock from Adam and Eve. You have, for the most part, the same weakness as others; the same means of salvation are provided for you as for others, and there lies before you the same happy goal to which others also look forward. Take care, therefore, not to exalt yourself at the cost of Christian humility. No creature is raised so high in dignity and sanctity as Mary, yet she surpassed all in humility. Turn to her with confidence, and, acknowledging your propensity to a vain self-esteem, beg of her to obtain for you a spirit of true humility, which may preserve you from the pitfall of pride, from all arrogance, and from all disdain of others, and make you pleasing to the Sacred Heart of her Divine Son.

October 26.

FRUITS OF HUMILITY.

I. CHRISTIANS who are humble are willing to know and acknowledge their faults and their weak points, and to permit them to be prudently spoken of to themselves. They are also willing to receive advice when tendered to them with due consideration. From this will result a clearer knowledge of themselves, and an attempt to correct their faults, and this will conduce to their profit and happiness. The proud, on the other hand, are blind to their faults, and they resent any allusion to them, so the faults remain uncorrected. Another result of humility is mistrust of oneself. The humble turn to God in all their needs. With St. Paul they say: 'Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God' (2 Cor. iii. 5). God rewards their trustful dependency on Him by according them help and protection in their distress and danger. St. James says: 'God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble' (iv. 6); and David says: 'He will save the humble of spirit' (Ps. xxxiii. 19).

Devout Christian, love the path of humility, in which are found the fruits of wisdom and the favours of Heaven. If you are little in your own eyes, God will magnify you. It is written: 'Humiliation followeth the proud: and glory shall uphold the humble of spirit' (Prov. xxix. 23). Be humble, and seek your own correction. Have you not just and ample reason to walk in all humility, considering your own faultiness and your many weaknesses? If you do so walk, God will comfort you with assurances of mercy and of help.

II. Another happy result experienced by the humble is a spirit of contentment. They do not deem themselves

worthy of special consideration, and they are content with their lot in life. They perhaps consider that they are favoured and blessed beyond their deserts. Both in prosperity and in adversity they bless the dispensations of Divine Providence, and they say with Job: 'If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil?' (Job ii. 10). This spirit of contentment extends itself in the truly humble to their views of their neighbour's prosperity. Not only do they witness this without envy or dissatisfaction, but they rejoice in it. They willingly admit their neighbour's good qualities, and hold him in esteem, and this leads to good feeling and peace. Humble Christians are careful not to constitute themselves judges of their neighbour, even when he has committed any fault, and this helps to confirm them in the practice of charity. They confine their judgments to their own conduct, and deal leniently with their neighbour's, preferring not to notice his faults. Humility leads them not to make themselves obnoxious to their neighbour, and not to push their own claims and rights with too much exactitude, and always without acrimony.

Devout Christian, let humility guide you in judging of your claims upon God's providence, and in your views of your neighbour's superior talents and virtues, and of his successes. Then will you experience contentment of mind, and you will seek to cultivate peaceful relations with your neighbour, 'with all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity' (Eph. iv. 2).

III. Other happy results of humility are the favours of God and the heavenly reward. The favours of God include the helps bestowed upon the humble to enable them to avoid sin, the special hearing accorded to their prayers, and the more abundant graces derived from the reception of the Holy Sacraments. The humble are usually devout, and devotion is as the cream of the service they tender to God. The rich spiritual favours lavished by God upon the humble far surpass all earthly gifts or treasures, and they comfort the humble, and make them happy in God's service. When our Lord said that the humble shall be exalted, He referred

as much to the future recompense of humility as to the triumphs of the humble in this life. If we become as little children we shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven. We must bear both suffering and humiliation now, but our sorrow will finally be turned into joy. Mary, in her canticle, said: 'He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble.' God put down the proud Lucifer, and exalted the humble Mary; the most exalted throne in Heaven after Christ's is now Mary's. Let all Christians value humility by its glorious reward in the kingdom of Heaven. Let them in this world share the humiliations of their crucified Lord, that they may partake with Him in the delights of Paradise.

Devout Christian, remember ever that he who humbleth himself shall be exalted. See, then, in the joys and glory of Heaven the crown of the humble. Strive ever more earnestly to root pride out of your heart, and to be truly humble. Beseech your heavenly Mother Mary to obtain for you the grace to love and practise humility that you may experience its happy results in this present life, and that you may finally attain to its reward in that kingdom where the humble are exalted.

October 27.

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT HUMILITY.

I. True religiousness and true virtue have humility for their foundation, and humility must play a conspicuous part in creating true greatness. For our Lord says: 'Everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled: and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted' (St. Luke xiv. 11). Our Lord, by His own example as well as by His teaching, showed the way to humility of life, a way so difficult to our nature. We must, however, school ourselves to the practice of this virtue if we would be pleasing to God, and if we would enjoy calm of soul. Pride is the obstacle to all good, and the source of many evils. It should be our constant endeavour to root up this vice, and to replace it with the lowly but precious plant of humility. There are various degrees of the holy virtue of humility, and all Christians may not attain to the highest degree; but we should recognize that the character and duties of the Christian life demand in some notable and appreciable degree the practice of this admirable virtue. Thus, for example, the submission of our intellect to the dogmas of the Church, and of our will to her laws, demands humility on our part; and without it, too, our dispositions in prayer, and in the reception of the Holy Sacraments, will be defective. This virtue is also necessary in the discipline of life, in the correction of our self-will, and in our obedience to the higher powers. In that it is so necessary we see its great excellence.

Devout Christian, ever love the holy virtue of humility. Place it as a foundation on which to build the edifice of your sanctification. Watch over your unruly natural feelings, which are opposed to everything that might humble you.

II. We should cultivate with assiduity every spirit that can bring down our pride; therefore should we cultivate

humility. Pride is a false friend. While inciting us to desire inordinately our own excellence, it leads us into a false position with regard to God and our neighbour, and it blinds us to our actual needs, and to our own shortcomings. It makes us odious in the eyes of God and of men. Pride leads us to rob God of the glory due to Him alone, and to deny our neighbour the consideration to which he is entitled. It seeks to place us on a pinnacle to which we have no right, and from which we must have a disastrous fall. Pride leads us into many faults, and it may even cause us to fall into mortal sin. The more we esteem ourselves, the more we fall into the disesteem of others. For all these reasons pride is to us a false friend. Let humility come to our rescue. The battle will be severe and long, but it is necessary. How different from pride is the holy virtue of humility! Humility may be described as a proper and praiseworthy self-abasement. It does not allow us to desire any praise or esteem, or any consideration, beyond what is strictly due to us; and it is modest in its claims even to so much as this. It causes us willingly to admit both to ourselves and to others our defects, our unworthiness, and our insufficiency, and to do this with candour, and not with hypocrisy. If we excel in any way, humility leads us to refer all the glory of it to God, and not to grieve if men deny us their praise. We recognize that we hold our talents and gifts from God as stewards, and we are not led on account of them to disregard our neighbour, or to make little of him.

Devout Christian, study the ways of true humility. Without this virtue you will indeed be poor, and you will be sadly wanting in exaltedness of character.

III. Humility should make us deem ourselves unworthy of any special gifts from God, and fit only for the lowest place among men. Even if we strive for advancement in worldly position, or for proficiency in science, art, or business, humility will so balance our mind as to prevent self-conceit or undue desire of praise or glory. Humility under these conditions should not prevent us from turning our talents and opportunities to the best account within

any legitimate sphere of action. It will lead us to have constant recourse to God for His aid and blessing; but this will not prevent our using all natural measures and precautions in pursuance of our plans and object, for this, we know, is according to God's will. The holy virtue of humility will prove our safeguard against the assaults of our spiritual enemies, for the mistrust of ourselves which it will engender will make us have constant recourse to God, the source of all strength. This virtue will also be the foundation of our future glory and happiness, for he that humbleth himself in this world shall be exalted in the world to come. Where is now the humble Virgin who called herself 'the handmaid of the Lord'? Where is now the lowly carpenter who led so retired a life with Jesus and Mary at Nazareth? Where are now all those wonderful Saints who loved reproach for God's sake, and whom the world scorned? They are exalted in the heavenly kingdom.

Devout Christian, let it not disturb your mind if now you are disregarded. Remember that for your sake our Lord became 'despised and the most abject of men' (Isa. liii. 3). If you now share His humiliations, you will hereafter have part with Him in His glory. How vain is all worldly greatness! It is won with great labour, and it passes like a shadow. Ask Mary, so noble in her humility, to obtain for you the grace to love this holy virtue, and to be earnest and constant in practising it.

October 28.

LOWLINESS LEADS TO EXALTATION.

I. Our Divine Lord came into this world in lowliness, and in life He suffered humiliations; but from these He passed in glory into His kingdom to reign for ever. Behold our Model! We must be content with a lowly lot on earth, and this, if only we live true to God, will be changed for the everlasting happiness and glory of Heaven. Happy is the man in whom this faith is, and who therefore embraces with patience his lot of labour, care, and suffering in this world! We see the humiliations of our Lord in the mystery of the Incarnation. 'He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant' (Phil. ii. 7). At His birth and through life He concealed His glorious Majesty, and appeared even as other men, and He did not disdain to work as a carpenter. In His death the climax was reached, for 'the Scripture was fulfilled which saith: And with the wicked He was reputed' (St. Mark xv. 28); or as St. Paul writes: 'He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death' (Phil. ii. 8). While dying on the Cross, the priests, the ancients, and the wicked thief mocked Him, blaspheming the while. In the most Holy Eucharist we witness further humiliation. How great is this mystery in His Divine condescension! To how many insults He exposes Himself! Man, in imitation of His Lord, must humble himself. He was made of the slime of the earth, and all through life he must live in a condition of dependence, and must suffer from many inconveniences. Then death comes and lays him low. He must descend into the tomb, and lie unknown or forgotten. Our present life is not the time for exaltation.

Devout Christian, do not seek to be different from your Lord and Master. Like Him, submit to the humiliations and trials of your present existence. Our Lord said: 'The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord' (St. Matt x. 24).

II. A day of triumph in the future life will come for us, as it came for our Divine Lord. The Heavenly Father, according to the prophet, received His Son with honour, and said to Him: 'Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool' (Ps. cix. 1). The glorious Angels and all the blessed ever extol Christ's Name, and proclaim His triumph. At the end of the world the earth shall tremble at His presence, and, as He Himself has said: 'Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn: and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven with much power and majesty' (St. Matt. xxiv. 30). Then, consigning all His enemies and unfaithful servants to their everlasting prison, He will distribute to all His Elect thrones in the everlasting heavenly kingdom. David thus prophesied: 'The Lord will send forth the sceptre of Thy power out of Sion: rule Thou in the midst of Thy enemies. With Thee is the principality in the day of Thy strength; in the brightness of the Saints' (Ps. cix. 2, 3). We are to triumph with Him. St. John says: 'When He shall appear, we shall be like to Him' (1 St. John iii. 2). And St. Paul says: 'He was made like to us in lowliness: we are to be raised to a likeness to Him in His glory (Phil. iii. 21). And our Lord has foretold it, saying: 'Then shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father' (St. Matt. xiii. 43). What a comforting assurance to the poor, the persecuted, the tempted, and the sorrowful, who in this vale of tears are seeking the kingdom of God! St. John saw in prophecy the glory of the Saints, as in a vision. He wrote: 'After this I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues: standing before the throne, and in the sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands' (Apoc. vii. 9).

Devout Christian, ever recall with joy and devotion the mysteries of our Lord's triumphs. What will He not do for those who trust in Him, and render Him faithful service? Avoiding all the ways of sin, cling to Christ, 'Who hath destroyed death, and hath brought to light life and incorruption' (2 Tim. i. 10). If even your life be made up of days of anguish, bear it patiently for the time. The day of triumph is not far distant. David says: 'Expect the

Lord, do manfully, and let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the Lord' (Ps. xxvi. 14).

III. However lowly we may cast ourselves in our self-abasement, in our penance, and in our self-distrust, and however much we may be overwhelmed with humiliations and sorrows, we shall never reach that depth to which our Lord descended before the day of His triumph. Be assured the triumph will not be for the sensual, the lovers of riches, the defrauders, the intemperate, the scoffers at religion, and other breakers of the Divine law, who now laugh in their wickedness. But triumph will be for all who have borne reproach with Christ; who have loved God's commandments; who have trusted in God, and worshipped Him, and prayed to Him; who have shown respect and charity to their neighbour; who have pardoned injuries; and who have not gone in the ways of vanity, worldliness, and dissipation, so as to forget their duty to God. All these in life may have suffered, and they may even have been contemned by the world; but the time of their trial went by, and God awarded them a place among the blessed. Let us, then, be content to sow in humility the seed which will give us the harvest of everlasting glory. In belief and in practice let us be true followers of our Lord, that we may merit to share in His triumph in the everlasting day of His principality. On the reckoning day at the end of the world, and thenceforward for ever, the wicked will be of no account. Their comforts, riches, pomp, pleasures, esteem, and honour will pass from them as if they had never been, and this they themselves will acknowledge, saying: 'All those things are passed away like a shadow' (Wisd. v. 9). Will it not then be seen that they received their soul in vain?

Devout Christian, choose the wise part. Let not reproach for Christ's sake deter you. The time of humiliations, labour, and distress will quickly pass by, and then will come the everlasting day of your exaltation. Ask Mary, ever true to her Divine Son, and a sharer in His sufferings, to obtain for you the grace of constancy while carrying your cross, that you may come finally to your heavenly crown.

October 29.

THIS LIFE THE TIME FOR LABOUR.

I. THIS life, which is uncertain in its duration, is given us wherein to merit our future reward. We must not regard ourselves only as beings endowed with bodily strength, mental activity, business capacity, scientific knowledge, and firmness of character, for, besides these gifts of Nature, there are others of a higher and spiritual order. By God's goodness we have been made children of grace. By means of the supernatural gift of grace we are to attain to a supernatural reward—a reward which is the fruit of grace, and not dependent on superior education, good social standing, talents, or refined character. This is the heavenly reward for which all men should labour during the present lifetime. If, aided by grace, we keep God's commandments, profess the true faith, do good works, and comply with the duties of religion and of our state in life, we shall thus fulfil the noble end for which God gave us our being and life, and He will bestow upon us the everlasting reward hereafter. These works are to engage our attention during life, and they will be the source of merit to us. After this life there will be no more labour and no more merit. 'The night cometh when no man can work' (St. John ix. 4). The reward which God will bestow will more than compensate us for our labours, sufferings, and anxieties in this life. How many men, alas! there are who are not striving to merit the everlasting reward! All their thought and all their labour is for this present life.

Devout Christian, God has created you to labour, not for passing gains, but for such as are everlasting; not for earthly honours, but for heavenly glory; not for the broken and uncertain joys which the world gives, but for joys and blessedness without alloy, cessation, or diminution in the kingdom of God.

II. Now, in this present life, we must labour to merit our future reward. In Hell the lost souls suffer punishment, but their sufferings do not expiate their sins, for there is not even the least degree of merit in enduring them. In Purgatory the suffering souls expiate their sins, not by reason of their merits, but by reason of their enduring the judicially appointed suffering. In Heaven the blessed do not merit, but they enjoy the fruits of their merits. Only on earth is the place and the time for merit. Now is the time for sowing, and not for reaping the harvest; now is the time for labour, and not for repose; now must we engage in the battle of life, and not yet be crowned with glory. When the end of our life is reached, we must be able to say, with St. Paul: 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith' (2 Tim. iv. 7). We should not repine if now we must labour, and taste the sorrows of life. We should turn to good account our present opportunities. What would be said of the farmer if during seed-time he were to remain idle? Owing to his folly and neglect there would be no harvest. Patiently must we now labour, and patiently, too, must we await the reward of our labours. St. James says: 'Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth' (v. 7). There will not be any disappointment in the future reward, if there be no remissness in the present labour.

Devout Christian, you have many opportunities of adding to your supernatural merit. Be happy to avail yourself of them. No prayer, no suffering endured with becoming patience, no duty fulfilled to please God, and no good work, will go without a superabundant reward. See, then, the value of this present life if well spent.

III. We labour well, and with supernatural merit, if, being in the state of grace, we do good works. When our works are only the ordinary occupations of our everyday life, they become meritorious works, if done with a good motive—namely, if done for God's sake, and to please Him. Only the good tree bringeth forth good fruit (St. Matt. vii. 17). Men in the state of mortal sin cannot perform

works meritorious of a heavenly reward. Our Lord said: 'As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it be united to the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me' (St. John xv. 4). We abide in Christ by grace—namely, by the grace of supernatural charity. Then are we spiritually alive, and capable of doing works which are spiritually good. The man who is in mortal sin is spiritually dead, and therefore incapable of accomplishing spiritual good. How wretched, then, is the condition of the sinner! So far as future reward is concerned, he is spending his life in vain. Of the just man, our Lord says: 'He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit' (St. John xv. 5). It must, however, be borne in mind that, however good our motive in our actions may be, or however great may be the good which we seek to achieve by what we do, it is absolutely necessary that what we do should not be evil in itself, for we cannot acquire supernatural merit by doing what is in itself wrong. How profitable are the works of the just man who every day offers all his works to God! He is preparing for himself an abundant recompense. It is written: 'The Lord maketh recompense, and will give thee seven times as much' (Ecclus. xxxv. 13).

Devout Christian, do not weary of serving God with a willing spirit, 'knowing that your labour is not vain in the Lord' (1 Cor. xv. 58). After this life there will be no more labour, but everlasting repose and peaceful happiness. Unite with all the just in seeking to sanctify life by good works, striving in all things to please God. Beseech Mary, your heavenly Patroness, to obtain for you the grace to be a good labourer in the vineyard, that when the evening of life is reached you may be called to your reward.

October 30.

DANGER OF WORLDLINESS.

I. The world is reckoned among the enemies of the soul; and it is so when men so far throw themselves into its ways, and adopt its spirit and principles, as to depart from Christ's doctrine, and from the fulfilment of the obligations imposed by God's commandments and religion. The pursuit of worldly avocations, the study of the sciences, the service of the State, and attention to social duties, are in no way opposed to religion, and in no sense prohibited; but what is wrong is to follow these pursuits in a wrong way, from a wrong motive, and without attention to the higher duties of religion, and to the fulfilment of the conditions of salvation. When men do not guide their conduct by Christ's holy teaching, and when they neglect the means of grace, they lose sight of their duty to God, and they become the servants of the world. Our Lord said: 'One is your Master' (St. Matt. xxiii. 8); 'No man can serve two masters' (vi. 24). Worldliness, in the sense of the service of the world attended with the neglect of religion, is an obstacle to salvation. In this sense it is destructive of our spiritual life; for it causes men to lose sight of the things that draw us to God, and that are conducive to attaining everlasting life, while it exposes them to the dangers of the world. These dangers are principally the loss of faith, piety, and virtue. Men who are held captive by worldliness form their judgments on worldly principles; they are principally moved to action by motives of worldly gains, pleasures, and distinctions, being guided by worldly maxims and human respect; and they regard everything that happens from a worldly point of view.

Devout Christian, if you faithfully follow Christ's teaching and obey His precepts, you will not be led away from

the right path by the spirit of worldliness. It is written: 'The world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof. But he that doth the will of God, abideth for ever' (1 St. John ii. 17).

II. Men who make an idol of the world fall away from Christ. They cease to be easily impressed by spiritual considerations, and to have a practical love of self-denial and piety. Sometimes they go so far as to scorn religion and to excuse vice. If they are at times conscious of their folly, they want the courage to embrace the ways of a truly Christian life. There are two ways before us—that of Christ, and that of the world. They lead in different directions. When we received the grace of Baptism we became Christians, and we undertook to live as disciples of Christ. We should prove unfaithful to our Lord if we ceased to follow Him. Men, therefore, who neglect their duty to Him, and who love the world, its ideas, its ways, and its rewards, are walking in the way of the world, and not in the way of Christ. St. James says: 'Whosoever will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God' (iv. 4). If men would have part with Christ, they must embrace a Christian life, and fulfil its obligations. Worldly pride must give place to Christian humility; sensual indulgence must give place to Christian purity and mortification; envy and ill-will must give place to Christian charity; and religious indifference must give place to Christian piety. Men imbued with worldliness declare the undertaking too arduous, but grace will make it easy. Men should not confine their glance to what is arduous in the Christian life; they should look also at its joys, consolations, and rewards, for these more than compensate for what is arduous. The world is a hard task-master, and its rewards are unreal; but God's servants enjoy a satisfying and durable peace and interior joy, and they look forward with confidence to the heavenly, everlasting reward.

Devout Christian, let not the self-denial demanded in Christ's followers appal you, for it is always accompanied by spiritual consolations, and it is the condition of future happiness (2 Tim. ii. 12). Ever look with mistrust upon

the world's satisfactions, and cling to your duty to Christ; then will you escape the dangers of the world.

III. Our present life requires that we should be in the world, and therefore be exposed to worldly influences. We must not, however, give our heart to the world, and we must avoid the company, the resorts, the literature, the entertainments, and the display, which would be likely to cause us to offend God, and to affect prejudiciously our spiritual well-being. We must not expose our faith or religious instincts to be contaminated by worldliness. We must be in the world even as the people of God when in Egypt and in Babylon. Like them, we must preserve the faith, traditions, and spirit of our forefathers, and avoid the errors and evil ways of the peoples among whom we live. Let us, therefore, beware of the insidious spirit of worldliness, and of the plausible recommendations of worldly-minded persons, lest we be deceived. Let our protection against worldly influences be fidelity to our practices of piety, and to the duties of our state, discretion in selecting our friends, a good use of our time, and a constant remembrance of the four last things—namely, Death, Judgment, Hell, and Heaven. God will then bless our lives, and guard us from our spiritual enemies. Let us be comforted by our Lord's words to His Apostles, for in some measure they are addressed to all His followers: 'In the world you shall have distress: but have confidence, I have overcome the world' (St. John xvi. 33).

Devout Christian, be not captivated by the vanities, worldly comforts, gains, and dissipations after which the followers of the world seek. There are purer, nobler, and more satisfying pursuits in fulfilling the duties of a truly Christian life; and these pursuits are not incompatible with the reasonable pursuit of literature, science, commerce, worldly advancement, and innocent pleasure. Let your duty to God have place before every other consideration. Ask Mary, the brightest model of holiness among God's creatures, to obtain for you grace to aim at holiness of life, and to avoid the dangers of the world.

October 31.

PILGRIMS ON EARTH.

I. God's true servants recognize that they are heirs of His kingdom, and that on earth they are not in their lasting habitation, but are 'strangers and pilgrims' (1 St. Pet. ii. 11). This knowledge inspires them with a spirit of detachment from the world, which very much assists them in their spiritual efforts. St. Paul tells us how the early patriarchs who saw from afar off the realization of God's promises, confessed themselves to be 'pilgrims and strangers on the earth'; and the Apostle notes that by so styling themselves they made known that they were on their way to a country. This was not the country from which they had come out, but a better one—'that is, a heavenly country' (Heb. xi. 13-16). St. Paul's estate was no different, as he himself tells us: 'If our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in Heaven' (2 Cor. v. 1). This, too, is our estate. God has made us for a glory to come, to which we attain after we have passed through this present temporary life of trial. Earth, then, is the place of our exile, and 'we have not here a lasting city: but we seek one that is to come' (Heb. xiii. 14). Our Divine Lord Who assumed our humanity, was Himself only as a stranger and pilgrim in the world, and after His mortal career, passed into His heavenly kingdom. He has gone before us, and we are to follow Him. He awaits us in His eternal kingdom. If we attach ourselves to this world as to our lasting and only dwelling-place, we oppose ourselves to God's designs in our regard.

Devout Christian, unite with St. Paul in desiring to be dissolved, and to be with Christ. He regretted the duration of his sojourn on earth, for, he said: 'While we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord' (2 Cor. v. 6).

II. If the earth were our lasting home, we should confine our aspirations to its blessings. This, however, is not so. Earthly blessings do not satisfy our soul's desires, and we cannot content ourselves permanently here. We long for change, and we do not find repose. Moreover, we see our friends passing away from us, and new generations of men succeeding those that have gone before. The very elements assail us, as though they would drive us hence, or at least make our stay troublesome, if not perilous. Evidently this world is not our home. Therefore, feeling ourselves to be only pilgrims, we should not attach ourselves inordinately to our ever-changing surroundings, or to any creature; but we should direct our lives continuously to God's service, by following the way of a good life that leads to the everlasting bliss and repose which our soul desires. God, moreover, has revealed that the earth itself shall be burnt up (2 St. Pet. iii. 10); and this cannot but convince us that men are not to dwell on earth for ever. Death, too, teaches us the same lesson; for then there is a separation of the soul from the body. In our present existence, body and soul are not permanently adapted to each other; for one is mortal, and the other is immortal. While this is so, there cannot be permanent contentment. Our rest and peace will not be here and under such conditions, but in the world to come; not in a body that is mortal, but in the same body changed and endowed with immortality, and thus permanently adapted to the immortal soul. All this teaches us that at present we are only pilgrims on earth.

Devout Christian, study the lesson thus taught. St. Paul says that in weeping, in rejoicing, and in using the world we should remember that the time is short, and that the fashion of this world passes away (1 Cor. vii. 29-31).

III. God's communications with us by His revelation, and by His grace, teach us that there must be in store for us something richer, fuller, nobler, and more lasting, than the temporal blessings appointed for us in our present existence. God did not become man only to obtain for us a measure of temporal enjoyment. He did not endure such excessive suffering in his sacred Passion only to pro-

cure for us a temporary alleviation of affliction or misery. No; these dispensations of Divine love and mercy were to effect some permanent good, and to win for us a heavenly and everlasting kingdom. They were to win for us grace to fulfil our glorious destiny, and to bring us from our pilgrimage on earth to the possession and enjoyment of our heavenly inheritance. 'The pledge of the Spirit' given us by God (2 Cor. v. 5) is God's grace and the light of our faith; and the grace given is a supernatural means to a supernatural end. Aided by our gifts, we pierce the darkness and the clouds, and we believe in the truths of God's revelation, and in the everlasting life to come. We grasp the meaning of St. Paul's words: 'By Him (Jesus Christ) we have access both in one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no more strangers and foreigners: but you are fellow-citizens with the Saints, and the domestics of God' (Eph. ii. 18, 19). We are now associated with all the faithful in the spiritual kingdom of the Son (St. John xviii. 36); and after our earthly pilgrimage, we shall pass, by reason of our sonship by adoption, into the kingdom of the Father (St. John xiv. 2).

Devout Christian, as a true pilgrim, lift up your eyes to the blessedness of the heavenly home. St. Peter says: 'We look for new heavens and a new earth. . . Wherefore, dearly beloved, seeing that you look for these things, be diligent that ye may be found undefiled and unspotted to Him in peace' (2 St. Pet. iii. 13, 14). Beseech Mary, your heavenly Patroness, to obtain for you grace not to be inordinately attached to the things of earth, and heavenly help to enable you to reach your everlasting home.

November 1.

THE SAINTS IN GLORY.

I. CHRISTIANS should live ever mindful of their heavenly destiny. The thought of it will stimulate their zeal for the better things, and support their fainting spirit under the burden of this life's labours and sorrows. In the ranks of the Saints in glory are men and women from every condition of worldly calling. How glorious are the Apostles, the Martyrs, the Confessors, the Virgins, and all Christ's Saints in the heavenly kingdom! The holy Apostles now rest after their evangelical labours. They now look back with satisfaction upon the persecutions they endured during their apostolate. St. Paul's account of his almost incredible labours and sufferings fills us with wonder (2 Cor. xi.). His zeal for God's glory bore him on. 'For which cause we faint not. . . . For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory' (2 Cor. iv. 16, 17). Such were his words. He and all the Apostles are seated upon heavenly thrones enjoying their holy triumph. They plead for the Church of Christ on earth, and they are gifted with special intercessory power.

Devout Christian, join with the pious faithful in honouring the Saints in glory. Recommend yourself to the intercession of the holy Apostles, through whom our Lord decreed to convert the world to His saving doctrine. They are your fathers in the faith. Learn from them courage in all your difficulties and a firm confidence in God's blessing and support.

II. The Martyrs now triumph over their persecutors, and rest after their victory. They praise God Who sustained them in the conflict. They are adorned with special tokens of God's favour, because they gave their very life for His

sake and for religion. 'These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb' (Apoc. vii. 14). They shine with exceeding brightness, and their torments are exchanged to the most exquisite joy and delight. In the glorious ranks of the blessed are countless Confessors who on earth adorned the Church with the lustre of their virtues and example. Some were Bishops and priests, others members of religious Orders, and others, again, were kings, husbandmen, merchants, tradesmen, recluses, and servants; but all were distinguished by their witnessing to Christ, by their devotedness to the Church, and by their virtue and piety. They avoided the pernicious and slippery ways of vice, and they despised the delusions of Satan and the dangerous allurements of worldliness in its many forms. God had the first place in their thoughts and affections, and their delight was to observe His law and to please Him. Happy Confessors! you are now enjoying the reward of your dutifulness.

Devout Christian, learn a lesson from the constancy of the Martyrs and from the virtuous lives of the holy Confessors. A measure of the grace which supported these Saints is offered to you. St. Paul says: 'To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the giving of Christ' (Eph. iv. 7). Hope, then, through a profitable using of grace, to reach the heavenly kingdom, and to be numbered among the Saints in glory.

III. Glorious among the Saints are the holy Virgins. They have entered with the Heavenly Bridegroom to the marriage (St. Matt. xxv. 10), and the celestial espousals are realized in the bliss of Paradise, in the possession and enjoyment of God. For His sake they disregarded the bland speeches and insidious advances of the crafty, the false flattery of admirers, and all intimacies that might have cast a shadow on their innocence, or made them less pleasing to Him. Now are they adorned with gifts of special lustre, and appointed to a privileged place near the Lamb (Apoc. xiv. 4). There, too, among the Saints are the just from among every nation and people (Apoc. vii. 9).

St. John heard a voice from the throne saying: 'Give praise to our God, all ye His servants: and you that fear Him, little and great.' Then he 'heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters' praising God. How happily all things are now changed for God's Elect! They have come through poverty to inestimable riches; through sickness and infirmities to never-ending happiness; through contempt and persecutions to honour and glory; and through self-denial and humiliations to everlasting delights. No shadow of distress, sorrow, or pain shall ever cross their unending bliss. Let all Christians look up hopefully to the kingdom of reward and to the happy portion of the Saints in glory.

Devout Christian, congratulate with the Saints on their glorious triumph, and see in it the reward of their loyalty to God, and of their long-suffering under the tribulations they passed through on earth. Beseech your heavenly Mother Mary, the Queen of all Saints, to obtain for you grace to walk in the footsteps of the Saints, that you may one day share their blessedness.

November 2.

THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

I. The souls in Purgatory are suffering the penalty of their sins. If they have committed mortal sin, its guilt and everlasting punishment have been remitted; but if any temporary satisfaction unremitted by penance or indulgences remained owing to God's inscrutable and unerring justice on account of such sin or of other lesser sins, such satisfaction is rendered in Purgatory. From our Lord's words: 'It shall not be forgiven him neither in this world, nor in the world to come,' we may learn that some sins are remitted in the next world; and as this cannot be in Heaven or in Hell, we conclude that there must be a Purgatory. Of the man whose works are found faulty at the judgment after death, St. Paul says: 'but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire' (1 Cor. iii. 15). We refer these words to the purgation of our sins through the sufferings in Purgatory. This suffering is only of temporary duration; its measure and duration are according to the satisfaction owing. The doctrine is clearly set forth by the Council of Florence: 'We decide that if the truly penitent die in the charity of God before having satisfied for their sins by worthy fruits of penance, their souls are purified after death by the pains of Purgatory, and they may be freed from these pains by the suffrages of the living—that is to say, by the sacrifice of the Mass, prayer, alms, and other works of piety, which the faithful are accustomed to perform for such of the faithful as are departed.' The same doctrine was confirmed by the Council of Trent.

Devout Christian, how admirable are the dispensations of God's mercy! We shall not be cast off for ever, if we die in lesser sins, or if we have not rendered satisfaction in this life for our greater sins whose guilt has been remitted.

Praise the mercy and long-suffering of your Heavenly Father.

II. While God's justice demands the satisfaction for sin which is rendered in Purgatory, His charity extends itself to the holy souls, supporting them under their sufferings. They may indeed claim our compassionate help, but no murmur proceeds from them against the just sentence passed upon them. Their feelings towards God are always dutiful and loving, and they bear their sufferings patiently and resignedly. They, however, long with unutterable desire for their deliverance; for they will then pass from the woes of Purgatory to the everlasting bliss of Paradise and the possession of God. They are comforted by the thought of their salvation and future happiness by the possession of God's grace, from which they shall never fall away, by their association only with the friends of God, and by the relief afforded them by the prayers and good works of the Church and of the faithful. These comforts help to sustain them under the painful burden of their sufferings. Let us add to their comfort and to their relief by our charity. 'If I have not charity,' wrote St. Paul, 'it profiteth me nothing.' Let us extend our charity to these souls who are the Elect of God, and our fellow-members in Christ. There may be among them the souls of our departed relations and friends, and even souls suffering because of disedification on our part which led them to offend God. Let us not be indifferent to their claims upon our compassionate help. The holy writer says: 'Restrain not grace from the dead' (Ecclus. vii. 37).

Devout Christian, try to realize the relations of charity which should bind you to all souls departed this life in the state of grace. They will be your companions in everlasting bliss. Let every soul that is dear to God be dear also to you. Every prayer and every good work offered on behalf of the souls in Purgatory will be precious in God's sight.

III. The holy souls in Purgatory brought upon themselves their present woes. Too late did they see the folly of neglecting God's claims upon their devout and constant

service, of giving too much time to vanity and self-indulgence, of acting upon the impulses of nature, and failing to make serious effort to correct their faults. They now see that they would have escaped their present sufferings if they had shown greater zeal for their spiritual welfare, if they had assisted more frequently at the Holy Mass, if they had received the Holy Sacraments more frequently and more devoutly, and if they had been more earnest in striving to gain indulgences. The holy souls, if they could speak to us, would advise us in the words of Solomon: 'Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is all man' (Eccles. xii. 13); and in the words of our Lord: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice' (St. Luke xii. 31). Christians should recognize that, if they are now neglectful and undutiful, they will hereafter reap the fruit of their faultiness. The spectacle of the sufferings of Purgatory should impress on their mind the evil of venial sin, and should make them earnest in leading a good life.

Devout Christian, seek by works pleasing to God to atone now for your past faultiness, and watch carefully over your future conduct. Pray for the holy souls in Purgatory. St. Paul says: 'Do not forget to do good and to impart; for by such sacrifices God's favour is obtained' (Heb. xiii. 16). Commend to Mary, ever compassionate towards sinners and ever loving towards the just, the souls of your departed relatives and friends, and ask her to obtain for you the grace of constancy in piety, that you may escape the sufferings of Purgatory.

November 3.

HELPING THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

I. One of the signs of a truly Catholic spirit is charity towards the dead. To pray for the faithful departed is one of the spiritual works of mercy; it is therefore a work pleasing to God. Like Judas Machabeus, we believe that they who have fallen asleep with godliness (in the state of grace), have great grace (favour and reward) laid up for them (2 Mach. xii. 45). When we pray for the souls in Purgatory, or do good works in their behalf, especially if we offer the Holy Mass for them, these very works are of themselves acceptable to God, and they are all the more so by reason of the charitable motive which prompts us to perform them. God sees in the souls in Purgatory the work of His creative hands, and the likeness of the Creator. He sees that they have been redeemed by the precious Blood of His Son, Who did not consider it too much to become man, to suffer, and to die for their salvation. He sees that these souls have escaped everlasting reprobation, and that they will yet receive the everlasting heavenly reward. His grace moves us to benefit them. The decree of His justice pronounced against them must be fulfilled, but in this decree it is declared that the faithful on earth may apply suffrages in their behalf.

Devout Christian, hasten to gain the Divine favour by assisting the holy souls in Purgatory. Listen to God inviting you to mitigate their sufferings, and to shorten the time of their detention in Purgatory. Offer for them your prayers and good works that thus you may please God.

II. If we consider the lot of the souls who are suffering in Purgatory, we are touched with Christian sympathy. The infinite and unerring justice of God demands the

satisfaction which they are lovingly and patiently rendering; but we are permitted by the Divine mercy and goodness to offer suffrages in their behalf. Such suffrages, by God's merciful dispensation, afford relief to the suffering souls, by lessening either the intensity or the duration of their sufferings. We may surmise the rigour of their pains when we reflect that these pains are inflicted on account of sin, and when we further reflect upon the punishments of sin which we find recorded in the Bible. The souls in Purgatory are, during their detention there, deprived of the possession of God and of their heavenly inheritance, and they experience torments which are more severe than any pains endured in this world. In vain do they long for the vision of God. Of themselves they cannot now merit any mitigation of their sufferings; they must complete their full sentence of punishment (St. Matt. v. 26). We, however, may hasten to their assistance; we may offer our prayers and good works in their behalf. The Holy Scriptures say: 'It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins' (2 Mach. xii. 46).

Devout Christian, join with the Church and with pious Catholics in every land in offering suffrages for the souls in Purgatory. You will thus succour them, and obtain some relief of their sufferings. They are deserving of your sympathy, and they have their claim upon your charity.

III. While we are moved to charity towards the holy souls in Purgatory because it is pleasing to God, and because of the aid we thereby render to the suffering souls, we may console ourselves with the thought of the blessings such charity will bring to ourselves. Our Lord has said: 'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy' (St. Matt. v. 7). It should, indeed, be a matter of reproach to us if we did not pray for the souls in Purgatory, because such neglect would be so un-Catholic, and because the holy souls are worthy of our compassion; but we may add that we might thereby stay the flow to ourselves of many Divine mercies. On the other hand, we may be sure that the Catholic piety which moves us to help the holy souls

will be amply rewarded. God will reward our charity now by showing us mercy, and by opening to us the hand of His bounty, and hereafter He will apply in consoling measure to us, if we be in Purgatory, the suffrages of the faithful. Furthermore, we shall by our compassionate aid earn the gratitude of the holy souls, and they will help us now according to the measure of their ability, and after their deliverance, in fuller measure. They will prove themselves our friends. These considerations should move us to strive to help the souls in Purgatory.

Devout Christian, show your compassion for the holy souls by daily prayer for them. Pray for them during the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Offer your Holy Communion for them. Remember that they are Mary's children. She wishes you to help them. Ask your heavenly Mother to obtain for you a proper understanding of your duty towards the holy souls, and grace to accomplish it fully and with proper dispositions.

November 4.

THE REST OF THE JUST.

I. St. John heard a voice from Heaven telling him to write the following words: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours: for their works follow them' (Apoc. xiv. 13). We learn from this message of God's revelation that the works of the just merit heavenly rest. In this world they have labour, but in the next they shall rest. All things shall be changed, and our Lord's promises shall be realized. In His discourse upon the Mount, He promised to the poor on earth the riches of Heaven, to the meek the promised land, to the sorrowful comfort, to the hungry abundance, and to the persecuted the kingdom of Heaven. The just shall enter into undisturbed possession of their reward. No exterior force nor interior struggle shall ever dispossess them. They shall be seated on their thrones for ever and ever. Well, then, may the future reward be termed the rest of the just. When we pray for the souls in Purgatory, we beseech God to grant that they may pass from their abode of suffering, and enter the land of everlasting repose; and we say: 'Eternal rest give unto them, O Lord.'

Devout Christian, be patient under your present trials and labours. God invites you to the future rest. How comforting should be to you the thought of the everlasting repose! The just will rest in God Himself, and share His imperturbable bliss. David says: 'Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord: they shall praise Thee for ever and ever' (Ps. lxxxiii. 5).

II. There is a great contrast between the present condition of the just and the blessedness which will be theirs hereafter. The Saints experienced labour and trial on

earth, but they enjoy repose and unending happiness in their present abode. They may say with David: 'According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul' (Ps. xciii. 19). St. Paul declares the contrast where he says: 'I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come' (Rom. viii. 18); 'For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory' (2 Cor. iv. 17). In this world the just experience labour and anguish—physical labour, mental labour, and moral labour—and with fear and trembling they work out their salvation. How great will be the change when they enter into their rest! The sense of contrast will be a part of their reward; their relief from labour and anguish will be complete and lasting. Peace and repose of body, mind, and soul will be their everlasting portion.

Devout Christian, be not surprised at your daily trials and temptations. These were the portion of the Saints when they were on earth. Look confidently to the Divine mercy and bounty to support you now, and to bring you to the kingdom of unending rest. Pray to God for courage and strength. Through the darkness of the present hour look on to the brightness on the horizon of life.

III. The just struggle in life in the cause of God, of grace, of justice, and of virtue. They contend against the world, the flesh, and the devil. The battle will go on until death, and then shall they rest. They labour in the field of humility, of chastity, and of piety. They will continue to labour until the evening of life, and then they shall enjoy repose. 'Their works follow them.' The just are humble; they are sometimes despised. Hereafter they shall be exalted; they shall be crowned. They love purity, and they are modest and retiring, reserved in speech, and cautious in their glances; hereafter they shall be praised. The Holy Scriptures tell us that the generation of the chaste 'is known both with God and with men . . . it triumpheth crowned for ever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts' (Wisd. iv. 1, 2). The just are pious;

they love the service of God and the duties of religion; they are unworldly and devoted to charity. Hereafter they shall 'shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father' (St. Matt. xiii. 43).

Devout Christian, love the path of the just. Do not seek to shine in the world; let your justice be known to God. You have espoused the cause of God and of virtue; you bear the yoke of Christ. Our Lord's promise will surely be fulfilled: 'You shall find rest to your soul' (St. Matt. xi. 29). Pray to Mary to obtain for you zeal in the service of her Divine Son, and patience under your present labours and trials. Remember St. Paul's consoling words: 'There remaineth therefore a day of rest for the people of God' (Heb. iv. 9).

November 5.

THE LOT OF THE SAINTS.

I. We contemplate with joyful satisfaction the happy portion of the blessed. It is before us as a display of Divine munificence, inviting us to trust God, to love Him, and also to seek at His hands a like portion for ourselves. God is lavish in bestowing His rewards. He has bestowed upon the blessed heavenly beauty and glory; He has enriched them with incomparable gifts and adornments; He more than satisfies all their desires; and He has established them in unspeakable bliss. Their souls are in His hands. Happy are all souls that He blesses! The lot of the Saints is one of reward. Now do they see their virtues crowned. They were humble, and it is written: 'The humble shall be exalted.' They practised charity and almsgiving, and it is written: 'As long as you did it to one of these, My least brethren, you did it to Me.' They were obedient to God's law and submissive to His appointments, and it is written: 'Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things.' They were detached from worldly attractions, and devoted to God's service, and it is written: 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' Who would not wish favour and recompense from God?

Devout Christian, God blesses you now, and He consoles you with a hope of receiving His rewards hereafter. Despise all the ways of evil, and cling with constancy to God's service. Let nothing pain you so much as to be guilty of offending Him.

II. How different from the lot of the Saints is that of the wicked! These latter will be consumed with everlasting envy when at the last day they shall behold the glory of the Saints. Then shall they say: 'These are they whom we had some time in derision and for a parable of reproach.

We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the Saints.' Too late shall the wicked then recognize their own folly, saying: 'The light of justice hath not shined unto us. . . . We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction. . . . The way of the Lord we have not known' (Wisd. v.). Then shall they see how wise the just were in combating their passions, in restraining their evil inclinations, in avoiding what might have proved a cause of sin, in living religiously, and in loving virtue. They will admit, then, that all this was according to true wisdom, while their own conduct manifested a fatal folly. The Holy Scriptures say: 'The wicked shall be punished according to their own devices: who have neglected the just, and have revolted from the Lord. For he that rejecteth wisdom and discipline is unhappy: and their hope is vain, and their labours without fruit, and their works unprofitable' (Wisd. iii. 10, 11). Of the just it is written: 'God hath tried them, and found them worthy of Himself.'

Devout Christian, you will never regret what you do for God. Ever respect the sacredness of His law, and acknowledge the beauty of holiness. Then will your life lead up to the blessedness of the just hereafter. Let a holy discipline control your desires, your affections, and your conduct, that your feet may not depart from the right way.

III. The lot of the Saints is one for ever free from all unhappiness. St. John heard a great voice from the throne, saying: 'Death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more' (Apoc. xxi. 4). For evermore shall the Saints love God, praise Him, and enjoy Him. We cannot in this life realize what this means. Our joys are few and passing, and we experience no happiness from which we might form an idea of the true, imperturbable, and everlasting happiness which is the lot of the Saints in Heaven. Let hope console and support us under our present life of trial. Tobias said: 'We are the children of Saints, and look for that life which God will give to those that never change their faith from Him'

(Tob. ii. 18). May the Saints ever pray for us that we may adhere to God, and tread the path which leads to Heaven. Let us ever regard with dread the evil or dangerous ways that are trodden by the unwary and by the remiss. Let our lives be in keeping with our heavenly and eternal destiny. We cannot make our salvation too secure.

Devout Christian, a holy and a happy way is marked out for you; only an enemy will ever seek to induce you to depart from it. Mistrust all counsellors who would lead you to undervalue spiritual blessings, or to disregard the warnings of your conscience. You desire to attain to the lot of the Saints; strive to live holily and conscientiously. Beg of Mary, your heavenly Protectress, to obtain for you the grace to use this world as if you used it not, and ever to aspire in a practical manner to the rewards of everlasting life.

November 6.

LESSONS FROM THE SAINTS.

I. Holy Church commemorates the triumph of all the Saints. We are bound to them in a holy communion in Christ Whose members we are. They form the Church Triumphant, and we the Church Militant. We do not ask concerning their nationality, their condition when in the world, or even their names; it is enough for us to know that they are the friends of God and our brethren in Jesus Christ. We felicitate them upon their triumph and their everlasting reward, we honour them, and we claim their patronage and intercession. We have also to learn lessons from their lives. The Saints are in Heaven because they were poor in spirit, meek, merciful, clean of heart, zealous for justice, and because they bore tribulations and persecutions in the cause of justice, and laboured in the interests of peace and charity. If we ask with David, 'Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle?' we must answer by pointing to the path trodden by the Saints. If we walk in their footsteps we shall attain to their everlasting fellowship and blissful reward.

Devout Christian, recommend yourself earnestly to the prayers of the Saints, and study the lessons conveyed by the history of their lives. Be not seduced by the example of worldly-minded persons; be not remiss in piety in order to gratify a vain love of society and pleasure; but regulate your life by prudence and heavenly wisdom in imitation of the Saints.

II. We should learn from the Saints to be faithful to the duties of our calling. Salvation is to be found in every calling that is not opposed to the requirements of a true Christian life. We should, therefore, labour for our sanctification in that sphere and condition of life in which we are

placed. St. Paul says: 'As the Lord hath distributed to everyone, as God hath called everyone, so let him walk. . . . Let every man wherein he was called therein abide with God' (1 Cor. vii. 17, 24). God gives to persons of every condition the graces they need to sanctify their souls, and to fulfil the duties of their condition. Christians should therefore be persuaded that there is no incompatibility between their station in life and their sanctification. Among the Saints are to be found kings and queens, warriors, merchants, servants, tradesmen, and labourers, rich and poor. Let us, then, have a fear that, if we were to depart from the path of life in which God's providence has placed us, we might thereby expose ourselves to difficulties and dangers which might bring ruin to our soul.

Devout Christian, seek ever to be content with your lot in life, but ever pray for God's grace and blessing. Praise the Providence of God which has blessed you with so many gifts, spiritual and temporal, and strive to use them profitably both for God's glory and for your own salvation.

III. We have to learn from the Saints to avail ourselves of the helps of religion. Men are lost because they neglect prayer, and do not seek through the Holy Sacraments the spiritual helps of which their soul stands in such need. They therefore fail where they should succeed, and they are overthrown when they should be victorious. The Saints did not rely in the first place upon their own strength, ability, or ingenuity; but they sought God's help by prayer, and by recourse to the Holy Mass and to the Sacraments. Many of them spent even a considerable part of the night in prayer. What a lesson to persons who altogether neglect prayer! The Saints were so religious-minded that God's will was their first thought and supreme law. The aid of religion should be particularly sought in times of mental distress and worry, and in times of special temptation, difficulty, and danger. Who are the persons who are overcome and who fail miserably? Are they not usually those who neglect prayer and the Holy Sacraments, who do not think of God, who are remiss in conduct, and whose minds and hearts are worldly and sensual?

Devout Christian, if you would be staunch in virtue and dutiful in conduct, imitate the Saints in their piety. Seek ever the support of religion. Let your confidence in Mary bring you ever to her feet in all your necessities. Ask her now to obtain for you grace to walk in the footsteps of the Saints in all dutifulness and piety.

November 7.

THE EXAMPLE OF THE SAINTS.

I. If we would reach the kingdom of everlasting reward we must walk in the footsteps of the Saints along the narrow way that leads to life. Some remiss Christians say that this is impossible; but by the grace of God it may be done. The Saints were men and women like ourselves, and they lived in the same world as ourselves, and, like ourselves, they had to contend with the devil, the world, and the flesh. They did not, however, take their maxims from the world, nor did they worship mammon, or form their conduct by human respect. They did not ask themselves what the world would say, but what God would say and judge of their conduct. The world loves its own; it did not always love the Saints. The Saints did not yield to the weaknesses and cravings of the flesh; it was an enemy with which they held no parley, for to yield to it means disgrace and defeat. Finally, they despised the devil, and the devil feared them. He laid snares for them; he raised persecutions against them; but they, by God's grace, were staunch. They watched and they prayed, and God gave them a signal victory over him.

Devout Christian, let the bright example of the Saints encourage you. Strive to conquer as they conquered. What example do you give to others? Ever walk in the narrow way, and let the light of your Christian virtues and conduct shine before your neighbours. Then will you be a companion of the just on earth, with the hope of being a companion of the Saints hereafter.

II. If we are invited to follow the example set by the Saints there are provided for us the means of doing it. The Saints turned to good account the lights and helps to sanctification which are provided for all Christians. The

holy faith enlightened and guided them. The grace of God's Word encouraged and urged them. They loved its lessons. Our Lord's life, Passion, and death were the theme of their thoughts. Prayer and the Holy Sacraments were to them fountains of strength and of heavenly sweetness. Mortification was a remedy for spiritual disorders. In trial and persecution they cast themselves upon the Divine aid. By the help of these graces and practices we also may attain to the degree of perfection to which God calls us, and to the heavenly reward. The example of the Saints in using the means of sanctification should move us to do the same, and we might ask ourselves what our case would be if we were to neglect those means. What will be said of us if, with churches so near, Masses so many, priests ever preaching, Sacraments ever available, opportunities of grace in abundance, and with unrestricted liberty to practise our religion, we yet are worldly, indifferent, or wicked ?

Devout Christian, you will not be sanctified if you do not use the means of sanctification. Regret any remissness there may have been in the past, and resolve now by God's grace to be henceforward more earnest in the use of those means. Thank God for all the bounties of His providence for your spiritual welfare.

III. Many men will not follow the Saints; they readily accept light and leading from others who are less wise, less enlightened, and less devout than were the Saints. On every side we meet with the spectacle of the blind leading the blind. Many want no yoke, no restraint, no law, no prayer, no spirituality, and no responsibility; they are content to be children of nature, and not of grace. To such as these the example of the Saints is a matter of no concern. Let it not be so with us. There is only one Heaven—that of the Saints, and only one way to it—the way they trod. There is only one Christ and Saviour, and He has said: ' No man cometh to the Father but by Me ' (St. John xiv. 6). There is only one saving Gospel: ' One Lord, one faith, one baptism ' (Eph. iv. 5). and only one true teaching, with one Church to convey it to us: ' Upon this rock I will build My

Church'; this is the Church of the Saints. What hope, therefore, is there for those who do not walk in the way of the Saints? St. Paul says: 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see God' (Heb. xii. 14).

Devout Christian, ever fight the enemies of your salvation, ever avoid the dangers to your salvation, and ever use the means that will ensure your salvation. The Saints did these things. The time for grace, labour, merit, and mercy is every day shorter; be therefore in earnest, and do not defer profiting by the example of the Saints. Pray to Mary to obtain for you a spirit of devotion to the Saints, and a sincere desire to walk in their footsteps.

November 8.

DEVOTION TO THE SAINTS.

I. We manifest devotion to the Saints especially in two ways—namely, by honouring them, and by invoking their intercession. It comforts us that as members of the Church we hold communion not only with one another, but also with the Saints in glory, for the household of Christ to which we belong embraces all who are united to Him. St. Paul says: 'You are fellow-citizens with the Saints' (Eph. ii. 19). We are in fellowship with those in Heaven as well as with those on earth. If we have imbibed the true spirit of the Church, we shall treasure in our heart of hearts that devotion to the Saints which she inculcates in so many ways, and which her children have always displayed. We honour the Saints because they are worthy of honour by reason of the holiness of their lives, and also by reason of the bright example they have set of noble and virtuous conduct. We recognize them as God's friends and ours also. Our Lord says: 'You are My friends if you do the things that I command you' (St. John xv. 14). The Saints were God's most obedient, faithful, and loving servants. They were adorned by God in this world with many rich graces and exalted virtues. We admire in their sanctity the work of God's grace with which they co-operated so faithfully.

Devout Christian, honour the Saints with devout affection as God's friends deserve to be honoured. David said: 'To me Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honourable: their principality is exceedingly strengthened' (Ps. cxxxviii. 17). Of the servants of God under the Old Dispensation it is written: 'Their bodies are buried in peace, and their name liveth unto generation and generation. Let the people show forth their wisdom, and the Church declare their praise' (Ecclus. xliv. 14, 15).

II. God's rewards to His friends in Heaven make them exceedingly honourable. They are crowned there, and they enjoy the glory and the delights of the heavenly kingdom. The Psalmist says: 'They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house: and Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure. . . . Let the just feast and rejoice before God: and be delighted with gladness' (Ps. xxxv. 9; lxvii. 4). The Church on earth honours the Saints by inscribing their names in her calendar, by appointing festivals and offices in their honour, by dedicating churches to them, by giving their names to her children, by revering their relics and statues, and in other ways perpetuating their memory. The Saints thus become dear to the faithful, who honour them as their heavenly friends and patrons. Devotion to them has been the practice of all Christian times: it has grown up with the Church. We believe that God permits them to know our needs and our infirmities, and to hear our prayers. They know how we honour them, the ways in which we manifest our love and veneration for them, and we are confident they will reward our devotion by the favours they will obtain for us. Let us in an especial way honour our patron Saints. We may do this by keeping their festivals with special devotion, by having their pictures in our houses and in our prayer-books, by receiving Holy Communion in their honour, and by trying to imitate their notable virtues.

Devout Christian, do not deprive yourself of the fruit of devotion to the Saints. Happy will you be if heavenly Patrons plead for you, and help you by their interest and intercession in your behalf.

III. We both honour the Saints and gain blessings for ourselves by seeking the intercession of the Saints. Let us run to them with our prayers in our spiritual and temporal needs. If God heard their prayers while they were still on earth, and bestowed even miraculous favours through their agency, we feel assured that He will grant equal, and even greater, blessings in answer to their prayers now that they are in Heaven. We remember how the afflicted were healed when only the shadow of St. Peter fell upon them

(Acts v. 15), and when handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched St. Paul's body were applied to them (Acts xix. 12). Pleading now in the heavenly places, enshrined in glory, these great Saints will not have less power with God. The Council of Trent (Sess. XXV.) says: 'The Saints who reign together with Christ offer up their own prayers to God for men. It is good and useful suppliantly to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, power, and help for obtaining benefits from God, through His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who is our only Redeemer and Saviour.' When we show devotion to the Saints, we look through the dust and mist of the earth on which we live to the bright firmament of heavenly light and glory, and it rejoices us to think that we are associated in Christ with the citizens of the household of God in Paradise, and that we may count upon their charity and help.

Devout Christian, avail yourself of the powerful intercession of your friends in Heaven. Look up with special confidence in Mary, the 'Queen of all Saints,' and beg her ever to watch over you with maternal love and solicitude. You are ever drawing nearer to the time when you hope to join her and all the blessed in the kingdom of your Father. May her prayers ever help you while you are on the way.

November 9.

DEVOTION TO PATRON SAINTS.

I. It is according to the dispensations of God's providence that many blessings, both spiritual and temporal, should be bestowed upon us through the intercession of the Saints. It is usual for Christian parents to give their children at Baptism the name of one of the Saints, and this Catholic custom should be faithfully observed and handed down to future generations. Parents thus place their children under the care of a heavenly Patron, and they should in due time instil into their children's minds becoming devotion to these Patrons. All the Saints are our heavenly intercessors and spiritual friends. As members of the Church, therefore, we hold communion not only with one another, but the household of Christ, to which we have the great happiness to belong, brings us also into fellowship with the Saints in Heaven. If we have imbibed the true spirit of the Church, we shall ever cherish that devotion to these Saints which in so many ways she inculcates, and which her children have in every age displayed. The Saints were in this world the faithful servants of God, and now they are enjoying the heavenly reward. We honour them because of the holiness of their lives on earth, because of the bright example they set of noble and virtuous conduct, and because of their present glory and high estate in Heaven to which God has raised them.

Devout Christian, call to mind St. Paul's words: 'You are fellow-citizens with the Saints' (Eph. ii. 19; Heb. xii. 23), and seek ever to commune with the Saints with becoming reverence and piety. We should honour those who are worthy of honour (Rom. xiii. 7).

II. The graces which raised the Saints to an eminent degree of sanctity in this world were so many tokens to

them of God's love and friendship. God adorned their souls with many spiritual gifts, and led them in the way of perfection by labours, temptations, joys, and sorrows. Happily the Saints, supported by grace, followed God's guidance, and carefully avoided the seductions of worldliness and of all evil; or if at any time they fell away, moved by grace they became true penitents and made amends. Of some of them it is written that they were 'Rich men in virtue, lovers of beautifulness: living at peace in their houses' (Ecclus. xliv. 6). God has now placed them in His kingdom, making them partakers of everlasting glory. It is written: 'Let the just feast and rejoice before God: and be delighted with gladness' (Ps. lxvii. 4). Therefore does the Psalmist say: 'To me Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honourable: their principality is exceedingly strengthened' (Ps. cxxxviii. 17). In honour of the Saints the Church has appointed festival days, with appropriate offices and Divine praises thereon; and in their honour, and under their patronage, she dedicates churches, monasteries, colleges, and kingdoms. She also erects and blesses in their honour statues and pictures, and she venerates their relics.

Devout Christian, be not remiss in honouring and invoking God's friends, that you may receive many blessings through their intercession. Read with devout recollection the history of their lives, and strive to imitate them.

III. The Council of Trent (Sess. XXV.) lays down the following teaching: 'The Saints, who reign together with Christ, offer up their own prayers to God for men. . . . It is good and useful suppliantly to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, aid (*opem*), and help (*auxilium*) for obtaining benefits from God, through His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Who alone is our Redeemer and Saviour. . . . They think impiously who deny that the Saints who enjoy eternal happiness in Heaven are to be invocated.' Although the Saints have passed away from earth, death has not destroyed the bond of charity which binds them to us in interest and affection. St. Paul says: 'Charity never falleth away.' If the prayers of the just on

earth avail much with God for our benefit (St. James v. 16), we may well believe that those of the Saints in glory will avail even more. St. John invoked grace and peace not only from God, but also 'from the seven Spirits which are before His throne' (Apoc. i. 4). With what enthusiastic devotion and confidence have not priests and people for centuries said or sung the Litany of the Saints! and how important a place in Catholic worship does not devotion to the Saints hold!

Devout Christian, renew yourself in piety towards your patron Saints, and be resolved ever to commit yourself to them in your labours, temptations, and difficulties. Be assured that your piety will be rewarded. Ask Mary, the 'Queen of all Saints,' to obtain for you a true and constant spirit of devotion to the Saints that you may dutifully honour and invoke them.

November 10.

OUR HEAVENLY LOT.

I. CHRISTIANS should be exceedingly comforted by the thought of God's desire of their salvation. Our Lord gave utterance to this desire in His prayer after the Last Supper, when He said: 'Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me' (St. John xvii. 24). Our Lord does not wish the fruits of His life, sufferings, and death to be lost. He has loved men with an astonishing love, and He does not wish to be eternally separated from those whom He has loved. O sinners, why will you compel your loving Saviour to cast you from Him for ever? In His prayer, our Lord prayed for all His followers, not wishing that any should be lost. He knows us, He takes an interest in our welfare, He desires our salvation, He prayed when on earth to have us with Himself. Do we reciprocate His desires? Do we desire to be with Him? As we do not wish to spend our eternity without Him, and to be driven from before His face, what are we doing now to manifest our determination by His grace to attain our heavenly lot? Should not this determination be manifested by our aspirations, our aims, our efforts, and our manner of life? Some one has said that heavenly-mindedness is a sign of predestination. Alas! then, that so many men are worldly-minded and carnal! Alas! that so many are so inordinately attached to earthly things that they do not raise their eyes to aspire to the heavenly reward!

Devout Christian, thank God for designing you for a glorious lot in Heaven. Thank your loving Saviour for His prayer to have you with Himself, and thank Him also for shedding His precious Blood to save you. Do not permit yourself to be deceived and allured by the dross and

glamour of worldly gains and distinctions, but nourish your soul with heavenly desires.

II. The broad way of which our Lord tells us (St. Matt. vii. 13) does not lead to the heavenly kingdom, but to destruction. We read of this same way: 'The way of sinners is made plain with stones, and in their end is Hell, and darkness, and pains' (Ecclus. xxi. 11). Sinners pursue inordinately, and with grave offence to God, worldly gains and pleasures, and even things that are base and unworthy. What will they not endure, what will they not do, to further the unworthy ends they set before themselves? Let it not be thus with us. Let us never lose sight of our heavenly destiny. Let no fear of what men may say or do, let no desire to please men, let no irregular desire of gain or pleasure lead us to disregard God's sovereign claim upon our love and service. We will not allow any creature to usurp in our heart the place that belongs to God. We will aim at ends and pursue ways more worthy of dutiful Christians. The heavenly lot for which God so lovingly destines us is the enjoyment of the everlasting inheritance. Our spiritual enemies would delude us and ensnare us by means of other attractions, and the weakness and sluggishness of nature would lead us into ways of religious indifference and neglect; but let a lively faith in the things of the future, and a determination not to lose the heavenly reward, maintain us in fidelity and fervour in God's service.

Devout Christian, desire and strive ever to walk in the way of the Saints. The little self-denial and effort which God's service demands now will be more than recompensed when you enter into the heavenly reward. The holy writer says: 'Be not afraid to be justified even to death: for the reward of God continueth for ever' (Ecclus. xviii. 22).

III. Christians must, in a sense, be with our Lord in this life before they pass away to be with Him for ever in the next. They must be with Him, by sharing His humiliations and sufferings. We should not then be surprised or scandalized if the Church on earth suffers and meets with opposition; so is it divinely appointed. We, too, must

suffer with her. Speaking of himself and of his own share of this burden of contradiction, St. Paul wrote, saying: 'Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh for His Body, which is the Church' (Col. i. 24). Our sufferings, labours, and humiliations in this world are only for a time, and they are tempered with many joys and consolations; but when we shall be with Christ hereafter, all these things will have passed away for ever. We shall be with Him in His heavenly, everlasting kingdom. That is the kingdom of which He said to Pilate: 'My kingdom is not of this world' (St. John xviii. 36). It is the kingdom of which He took possession on the day of His glorious Ascension; and there He awaits His followers who prove themselves worthy of it. All will not enter there; for He has said: 'Many are called, but few are chosen' (St. Matt. xxii. 14).

Devout Christian, let the thought of God's loving and bounteous designs in your regard reconcile you to that portion of trial which is your lot in this world. Let it also console you with a holy hope of attaining the heavenly lot. Say confidently with holy David: 'In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded' (Ps. xxx. 2). Recommend yourself with pious confidence to Mary, 'Queen of Heaven,' and ask her to obtain for you grace ever to direct your steps to the attainment of your heavenly inheritance.

November 11.

'SEEK THE THINGS THAT ARE ABOVE.'

I. In the midst of the labours, cares, hardships, sorrows, and disappointments which are our portion in this world, God brightens life with the vision faith gives us of the everlasting blessedness He has prepared for His Elect. St. Paul says: 'If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God' (Col. iii. 1). These things are in the kingdom of our Heavenly Father, where God manifests the grandeur of His Divine perfections, and where Jesus Christ is the joy and crown of His Elect. There, in that kingdom of inconceivable joys, are displayed for the everlasting happiness of the blessed the riches and extent of Divine love and goodness; and there does God communicate Himself to His faithful servants in all His majesty, and with all the charms of His Divine sweetness and infinite attractiveness. St. Paul says: 'We see now through a glass in a dark manner: but then face to face' (1 Cor. xiii. 12). We cannot now comprehend what it will be to revel in the bliss and glory of the heavenly kingdom; yet enough has been revealed to make us contemn the passing joys and gains of this world when they might prove an obstacle to the attainment of the everlasting reward.

Devout Christian, be resolved ever to seek the things that are above. While fulfilling the duties of your state of life, while lawfully pursuing earthly aims, be careful to beg God's blessing on your efforts, and never to neglect nor to compromise your spiritual and eternal interests. Remember ever our Lord's admonition: 'Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and His justice' (St. Matt. vi. 33).

II. 'Seek the things that are above'—in other words,

seek your everlasting happiness. What will be our condition in Heaven, as to soul and body? There, in Heaven, our soul, freed from the bondage of a corruptible body, will come to enjoy the full and unfettered freedom of God's Elect. It will be inebriated with heavenly and Divine delights, and it will drink of the torrent of God's pleasure (Ps. xxxv. 9). There, in Heaven, when it shall have risen, our body will put on incorruption and immortality (1 Cor. xv. 53). It will be endowed with agility, splendour, and every admirable quality, and it will partake directly of the delights of God's house, and shine as the sun unto all eternity. Let us ask who shall be our companions in bliss. There, in Heaven, we shall enjoy the society of the Angels and Saints, in whom there will be no fault nor blemish. With them we shall bask for endless ages in the glory of God's presence, and in the intercommunication of exquisite pleasure. What unspeakable joy we shall there experience in the society of Mary, raised as she is in beauty and glory above the highest of the heavenly Spirits! There, in Heaven, adoring our Divine Saviour, and ever enraptured with His love, we shall be the objects of His overflowing bounteousness. Our eyes shall dwell upon His beauty, our ears shall hear His voice, our tongues shall ever praise Him, our hearts shall respond to His love, and we shall be His well-beloved for all eternity. What an excess of joy and bliss all this will mean!

Devout Christian, pray that you may not be deprived of these delights. How far they exceed the passing joys of earth! Lift up your desires. 'Sursum corda.'

III. The possession of God will be the consummate bliss of Heaven. By the light of glory the blessed shall contemplate the Divinity, and they shall ever enjoy the Beatific Vision. Never again will sorrow, or suffering, or sadness, or fear, or distress, come near them to ruffle their peace and happiness; for such things can find no entrance into the realms of everlasting love, joy, and glory. Revelling in unspeakable bliss, the just will ever sing new canticles of jubilation and praise, while God Himself will be their portion for ever. When we think of these things that are

above, we are not surprised that the Saints desired to be dissolved, and to be with Christ. We are heirs of the heavenly kingdom. We await God's call to it. Let us not put obstacles to our attainment of this glorious and everlasting inheritance. Let us not barter it for unjust gains, for unlawful pleasures, or for passing vanities.

Devout Christian, the day of your deliverance from the bonds of the flesh may be nearer at hand than you are willing to believe. If you wish your soul to pass into the possession of eternal joys, you must seek them now and always during your brief sojourn on earth. Serve God in faith, in hope, in sincere charity, in patience. Beseech your heavenly Queen and Mother Mary to obtain for you grace to be preserved from everything unworthy in your affections, desires, and conduct. Recommend yourself constantly to her prayers and protection.

November 12.

UNPREPAREDNESS FOR DEATH.

I. The remote and continual preparation for death is a good life. Unfortunately, there are Christians who, neglecting this wise preparation, count upon making the immediate preparation well, hoping thus to secure their salvation. Their folly is seen in this, that they do not know if death will come upon them suddenly, or with due notice; and they cannot say if, when it does come, they will be able, or will have the grace, to make suitable preparation. In the case of the ten virgins the bridegroom came all unexpectedly at midnight while they slept. The five wise virgins were happily ready with their lamps burning; and when they heard the cry: 'Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him' (St. Matt. xxv. 6), they arose and trimmed their lamps. How different was the case with the five foolish virgins! They were not ready, and they said: 'Our lamps are gone out.' The wise virgins entered into the festal hall, but the foolish ones found the door closed against them. Our Lord drew this lesson from the parable: 'Watch ye therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour.' Men who do not live ready for death are like those foolish virgins.

Devout Christian, are you ready for the coming of the Bridegroom? Live ever in expectation of your summons, for you know not when it will reach you. Do not imitate those foolish Christians to whom, through want of being always prepared, sudden death might mean everlasting death. Pray for the grace to have your lamp ever burning.

II. Christians should be ever prepared for death, because it may come upon them by surprise. This is often the case even when sickness precedes it; either because they are convinced that they will soon be well again, or

because they think that death is not near. Death is a matter about which there are many delusions. Many men are taken unawares, and pass away before the necessary preparation has been made. How fatal any delusion in so serious a matter may prove! It will be fatal to Christians who have not lived well, and who, when death overtakes them, are in mortal sin. Christians who lead indifferent lives, who are ever repenting and relapsing into sin, and who make no serious effort to lead a really good life, expose themselves to danger, and they do not make a proper preparation for the momentous issue of life. Can they now assure themselves that their lamps will be burning brightly when the Bridegroom comes? None may be sure that this will be so, but negligent Christians give rise to misgivings, and this should not be. The parable of the ten virgins says: 'They that were ready, went in with him to the marriage.' It is necessary, therefore, to be 'ready.' A faulty, careless, and imperfect manner of living is not a good preparation for a happy and holy death; it does not even offer security of being 'ready' when the end comes, particularly if death should come suddenly.

Devout Christian, view rightly what you should do if you would not be taken by surprise when death comes. Persistent faultiness and religious indifference prepare men for a rude awakening at death. Pursue ever the path of the devout, and you will experience peace. Solomon says: 'Keep the law and counsel: and there shall be life to thy soul. . . . Then shalt thou walk confidently in thy way. . . . If thou sleep, thou shalt not fear' (Prov. iii. 21-24).

III. Christians are not on the watch for death if they have not sufficient oil in their lamps and if their lamps are not burning. They must not fall from charity and neglect grace; they must not disregard the conditions of salvation. 'Now is the day of salvation' (2 Cor. vi. 2); it is not to-morrow, nor is it in the future, or at death. By this is meant that only the present is our day; and that now, at the present, we must labour to secure our salvation; to-morrow we may not be here. David says: 'Expect the Lord and keep His way. . . . I have seen the wicked

highly exalted. . . . And I passed by, and lo, he was not; and I sought him and his place was not found. Keep innocence, and behold justice' (Ps. xxxvi. 34-37). How foolish are many Christians who hear the Divine warnings and exhortations, but who do not heed them! Do they wish to be cut off in their faultiness and unpreparedness? The foolish virgins in the parable, when they at length reached the festive hall, found the door shut. All was bright and glorious within. They called out, saying: 'Lord, Lord, open to us'; but the voice from within replied: 'Amen I say to you, I know you not.' Only those who are ready when the Bridegroom comes will ever enter the heavenly festive hall. The waiting may not be long. St. Paul says: 'Patience is necessary for you: that doing the will of God, you may receive the promise. For yet a little, and a very little while, and He that is to come, will come, and will not delay' (Heb. x. 36, 37). Happy are those Christians who by God's grace persevere in dutifulness and piety, and keep themselves ever prepared! Death will not take them by surprise.

Devout Christian, strive to be of the number of these wise servants of God. You know that death will determine your eternal lot, and that if you fail to die a happy death your lot in eternity will be for ever miserable. Direct your life wisely to secure a holy and happy death. Ask Mary, your heavenly Protectress, to obtain for you the grace to do this, and to perserve you from all heedlessness about your everlasting welfare.

November 13.

GUARDING OUR GRACE.

I. SANCTIFYING grace is a priceless treasure which we must guard assiduously. To do this, we must be ever on the watch against our spiritual enemies; we must avoid the company of the wicked and other dangerous occasions of sin; we must be strong in our determination to do what is pleasing to God; and we must use spiritual helps, such as prayer and the frequentation of the Holy Sacraments. With these precautions we may count upon preserving our treasure; but if we neglect them we expose ourselves to lose it. Our Lord said: 'Because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold' (St. Matt. xxiv. 12). If we go in the way of evil, so as to be surrounded by it, and to be in the midst of it, how shall we preserve ourselves in the state of grace? Our Lord's words teach us that Divine love and sin are so opposed to each other, that where one is, the other cannot be. Sin is defined a voluntary breach of the Divine law; so we call that a sinful act which, being free or voluntary, is positively opposed to the law of God, or is an omission of what that law requires us to do. On the other hand, charity is defined a theological virtue infused by God into our soul, which enables us to love God above all things for His own sake, and to love our neighbour for God's sake. Mortal sin cannot exist in a heart that is inflamed with Divine love; for such sin involves in it a disregard of God amounting to the despising of His love.

Devout Christian, guard yourself against every approach of evil, even as against a deadly foe vowed to destroy you.

II. If you dread the sad effects of sin, it will tend to strengthen your effort to guard your grace. See how sin debases man! It perverts both mind and heart. The

sinner often loves, desires, and seeks what he ought to abhor and avoid; often his preferences are, not for what is noble and profitable, but for what is base and useless; often he disregards what duty demands of him, and spends his time in gratifying his vices; often, instead of giving edification, and seeking to benefit those who depend upon him, he gives scandal, and by his bad example or bad advice, he causes sin in others. Such a picture ought to deter men from evil, and it ought to determine them to use every means necessary to their perseverance in grace. If we would guard our grace, we should carefully avoid the known occasions of sin and the company of bad and indifferent Christians; we should study what our duty to God and our neighbour demands of us, and strive to accomplish it; we should worship God as well in adversity as in prosperity, and bear our trials patiently; and we should direct our whole life to please God, and to fulfil the end for which He gave it. Actual graces would then be accorded us to enable us to persevere in grace, and we should experience many consolations to comfort and encourage us.

Devout Christian, ever look upon sin as a poison which embitters life and destroys all true happiness; but regard piety as a preservative of grace and of peace. Pray for a true sense of duty, and for an increase of Divine charity. In this way will you give token of the dispositions which are necessary to prepare the way for special Divine favours.

III. If we would guard our grace, we must beware of the deceits of Satan and of the world. Our Lord has said that there will arise ' false Christs and false prophets ' (St. Matt. xxiv. 24). How many men, to the dishonour of God and to the injury of their own soul, adopt false principles and evil practices ! Do they not leave God and His commands and threatened punishment out of their reckoning ? Do they not follow false guides ? Our Lord warns them not to heed these false prophets, but to remember that sooner or later they will have to give an account of themselves at the tribunal of the supreme Divine Judge. ' For,' he says, ' as lightning cometh out of the east, and appeareth even into the west: so shall also the coming of the Son of man be '

(St. Matt. xxiv. 27). Let us always reckon with God in the light of our Lord's holy teaching, and we will then be proof against evil influences, and we will promptly reject insidious advice and false principles. Let not the consideration of monetary advantage or convenience prompt us to adopt courses which may lead to everlasting woe. If, in order to be faithful to the obligations imposed upon us by God's law and by the Holy Church, we must oppose our friends and lose their friendship, let it be done. Our duty to God must come before every other consideration.

Devout Christian, recognize the obligation of being staunch in what concerns religion, duty, and virtue. If you prove to be weak and unfaithful, you will soon fall from grace. Pray that this may never occur. Ask Mary, who was ever faithful to grace, to obtain for you firmness in what concerns God's service, and a spirit of guardedness against spiritual seduction, and against all the forces of evil.

November 14.

ST. LAWRENCE O'TOOLE.

I. The archdiocese of Dublin honours as its holy patron St. Lawrence of the princely family of the O'Tooles. St. Lawrence was born about the year 1131 in the neighbourhood of Dublin. 'Many,' said the Psalmist, 'are the afflictions of the just.' Such proved to be the case with this Saint. When only ten years of age he was placed as hostage in the hands of the cruel and unscrupulous King of Leinster, who treated him with such inhumanity that his father had to compel the King to put him under the care of the Bishop of Glendalough, who was also Abbot there. Receiving from God an ecclesiastical vocation, he received his training under this Bishop. Upon the Bishop's death, Lawrence was elected Abbot, although at the time he was only twenty-five years of age. Five years later he was unanimously chosen to succeed Archbishop Gregory in the See of Dublin. By his preaching, virtuous example, and zeal, he succeeded in lessening the existing scandals, and in raising religion to a more universal and permanent culture among the faithful. His private life was marked by austerities of various kinds, including fasting and the use of a hair-shirt and of the discipline. Having established Regular Canons in his cathedral, he lived their life as far as his episcopal duties permitted. He practised hospitality and almsgiving even to the extent of keeping scarcely anything for himself. He loved prayer and retirement. After the midnight Office he continued his devotions before a crucifix, and he closed them with prayers for the faithful departed offered up in the graveyard adjoining his cathedral.

Devout Christian, learn from St. Lawrence how to be assiduous in all that concerns God's service. Do not

permit the difficulties of the times to stand in the way of what this service demands. Prove your love of God by your constancy. It is written: 'They that love Him will keep His way' (Ecclus. ii. 18).

II. The outcome of internal troubles was the invasion of Ireland by the English at the invitation of the deposed King of Leinster. While St. Lawrence, deputed for the purpose, was negotiating terms of surrender, two lawless leaders entered Dublin, and a massacre of the citizens ensued. The Saint, exposing his life to danger, stayed the massacre. Subsequently, when the English forces had occupied the city, he went through the provinces to stir up the Chiefs and their people to take steps to drive out the invaders. The effort by arms proved a failure; and four years later (1175) a treaty between the two countries adjusted the existing difficulties. St. Lawrence was one of the embassy sent to England to negotiate the treaty. In 1179 the Saint, together with three other Irish Bishops, assisted at the Third Lateran Council. Upon the occasion of this visit to Rome, Pope Alexander III. appointed him Legate of all Ireland. Back once more in Ireland, he gave himself unremittingly to his episcopal duties. During a scourge of famine which lasted three years, he was indefatigable in his efforts to mitigate the sufferings of his flock, and he made extraordinary sacrifices to meet the needs of the poor. He proved himself at all times a zealous pastor, both in maintaining ecclesiastical discipline and in providing for the well-being of the faithful, while at the same time he edified all by the saintliness of his own life.

Devout Christian, you learn from St. Lawrence's life how political and social disorders and distracting occupations are not necessarily obstacles to sanctity. If the heart be set on doing God's will, and if the soul be strengthened by prayer, God's help and protection will not be wanting. It is written: 'The heart of man disposeth his way: but the Lord must direct his steps' (Prov. xvi. 9).

III. God displayed in His servant many exterior tokens of sanctity. St. Lawrence, as we read in the lessons of the office of his festival, was distinguished for the gift of

prophecy and of miracles. By his prayers he drove away evil spirits, he restored to health persons afflicted with various diseases, and he recalled the dead to life. In the decree of his canonization it is stated that he restored seven deceased persons to life. St. Lawrence quitted Ireland in 1180 upon a political mission to the English King. At a first interview he found the King in no mood to listen to the proposals he had to make. The King departed to Normandy, and St. Lawrence followed him. At the interview there he obtained all he asked for, and he was treated most graciously. Upon his return journey the Saint fell ill, and when he reached Eu on the borders of Normandy, it was seen that his sickness was likely to prove fatal. When received into the monastery there, he said: 'This is my resting-place.' So impoverished was he by his large charities, he had no need to make a will, for he had nothing to bequeath. Worn out by his labours and austerities, St. Lawrence closed his holy life at Eu on November 14, 1180, being then in his fiftieth year.

Devout Christian, commend yourself to the prayers of this great Saint. If you strive ever to walk faithful to the duties of a Christian life, you need not fear to die. God will arrange all things for the best—when and where you are to close your life, and through what cause. Pray to Mary to obtain for you grace to be resigned to God's appointments, and to prepare yourself for death by earnest daily efforts to please Him.

November 15.

THE JUST MAN'S PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE.

I. It is quite evident from the sacred writings that God has a special providence for His faithful servants, and that the wicked merit his disregard and His severe judgments. Thus we read in the Psalms: 'Have no emulation to do evil. For evil-doers shall be cut off: but they that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the land. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: and thou shalt seek his place, and shalt not find it. . . . The Lord knoweth the days of the undefiled; and their inheritance shall be for ever' (Ps. xxxvi. 8-10, 18). Why is this special providence in favour of the just? It is because they are constant in God's service, and spend their life well, in view of the future reward. They are not willing to run any risk of losing their heavenly inheritance; they will not, therefore, for the sake of any forbidden pleasure or unlawful gain, disregard God's claims upon their love, worship, and obedience. They lead a Christian life, not by fits and starts, not for a few months of every year, but from youth to old age, year in and year out. Their faith is strong and practical, and they wish to see everything, and judge of everything, in the light of a lively faith. Their principles and conduct are formed upon the teaching of this faith. They fight earnestly against forming any habit of sin; and if they have the misfortune to fall into any sin, they do not delay to repent of it. Thus do these Christians, trusting in God's grace and mercy, make their preparation for the future life. How wisely they act!

Devout Christian, often reflect on the eternal issues of life; and pray for grace so to direct your life now that you may reach the goal of your soul's desires. Say with David: 'I believe to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living' (Ps. xxvi. 13).

II. When we compare our short life in this world with the everlasting life that is to follow it, and our temporal interests and pursuits with those that are heavenly and everlasting, does it not seem folly in men when they lose sight of their eternal destiny? Does the mariner steer his ship without directing it to the port he wishes to reach? The just man makes the end and crown of a Christian life the subject of his thoughts, and the object of his desires. To him is said: 'Fight the good fight of faith: lay hold on eternal life whereunto thou art called' (1 Tim. vi. 12). The effort and the contest are matters too serious to be neglected. If there should be some proportion between the reward and the labour that is to merit it, how great, we may say, should the labour be, seeing that the reward is the eternal possession of God in His heavenly kingdom? Alas! that so many men are thoughtless in their aims and conduct; for they direct their greatest efforts to secure for themselves this world's goods and pleasures, and they labour but little for eternal life. The just man sees their listlessness, and he deplores it. He remembers our Lord's words: 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting' (St. John vi. 27). 'Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth. . . . But lay up to yourselves treasures in Heaven' (St. Matt. vi. 19, 20).

Devout Christian, pursue in humility and fervour the path of piety. You will then be faithful in your duty both to God and man, and you will attain to your heavenly destiny. Be not seduced by worldly advisers who are false prophets (St. Matt. xxiv. 11). Follow the advice and the example of those who are spiritually wise.

III. The just man prepares for the future by watchfulness and prayer. He watches for the coming of the Bridegroom, so as to be found ready; and he watches for his spiritual enemies, lest they should seduce him or overcome him. Among these enemies are all the forces of evil and of neglect. The open forces of evil are easily detected, but those of neglect are more secret and more insidious. The just man detects these secret forces in remissness about

spiritual duties, in too great a preoccupation concerning temporal affairs and passing vanities, and in that spirit of tepidity which causes not only a disrelish for prayer and spiritual things, but also a want of proper interest in the duties of one's calling. Besides combating the open forces of evil and guarding himself against these other forces which lead men away from earnestness in God's service, the just man prays. He does so because he recognizes the efficiency of prayer as a protection, and as a means to procure from the Divine Bounty the aids and blessings which he needs. Finally, the just man receives patiently the cross that is laid upon him, and he regards it as a token of God's favour. In all these ways he seeks to prepare himself for better things to come.

Devout Christian, reflect on these matters, and see if anything is yet wanting to you (Ps. xxxviii. 5). Ask Mary, your heavenly Model and Patroness, to obtain for you the gifts of counsel and wisdom, that you may not go astray amidst the snares and dangers of life, but that you may pursue to the end the path of truth and virtue.

November 16.

DESIRE OF THE HEAVENLY REWARD.

I. It is not enough that we should believe in the heavenly reward; we must also strive to attain it. It would almost seem that some men take it for granted that they will enter Heaven at the close of this present life, irrespectively of their own labour to attain to so great and everlasting a reward. There are also, alas! other men who do not give a serious thought to the future life. There must be an effort, the conditions upon which God will bestow the reward must of necessity be fulfilled. Not all men will be saved. Our Lord has said that many are called, but few are chosen; and He has described how, when He will come to judge mankind, there shall be a separation of the just from the wicked, and how there shall be two different sentences passed (St. Matt. xxv. 31-46). In the matter, then, of the heavenly reward, we must not be indifferent: we must be seriously in earnest. The beginning of our effort to attain it must be our desire of Heaven and our determination to use the means of reaching it. In how many men do this desire and this determination exist in a practical way? How blind to their true and everlasting welfare are men who give little or no thought to the heavenly reward, and who fail to fulfil the conditions upon which it may be reached!

Devout Christian, never forget that the present world is to you only a place of exile. Lift up your eyes with a holy longing to the heavenly future, to the home of your eternity. Looking upon earthly distinctions, riches, and satisfactions, exclaim with Solomon: 'Vanity of vanities . . . and all things are vanity' (Eccles. xii. 8).

II. We may learn a lesson from the Israelites when they were held captive in Babylon, at a distance from their own beloved city. The people who had carried them away

said to them: 'Sing ye to us a hymn of the songs of Sion.' Thus did exiled Israel answer: 'How shall we sing the song of the Lord in a strange land?' (Ps. cxxxvi. 4). The picture of that sad banishment awakened the Royal Prophet's own devout enthusiasm, and led him to exclaim: 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten. . . . If I make not Jerusalem the begining of my joy.' There is another Jerusalem, the heavenly one, the city of everlasting peace. We cannot enjoy perfect happiness while we are banished from it. Of this city Isaias said: 'Look upon Sion the city of our solemnity: thy eyes shall see Jerusalem, a rich habitation, a tabernacle that cannot be removed' (Isa. xxxiii. 20). Only in view of the bliss of the heavenly Sion may we be truly consoled, and rejoice. 'Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in Heaven' (St. Matt. v. 12). If the prospect of this reward were to be closed to us, then indeed might we repine, lament, and despair. Alas! that men, by their own perversity and unfaithfulness to God, do actually close to themselves this glorious prospect! And while they do this, they give themselves to worldly enjoyments, and pretend that they are happy. What a fatal delusion is this!

Devout Christian, remember how our Lord pronounced a judgment of woe against the servants of this world (St. Luke vi. 25), and said: 'Woe to you that now laugh: for you shall mourn and weep.' Let your desire of the true and everlasting blessing of Heaven lead you to use wisely, and without inordinate attachment, the riches and pleasures of the present life.

III. The thought of the heavenly reward should act for us as a balancing power in the midst of the difficulties and cares of the present life. When we experience crosses, and in our struggles with our spiritual enemies, and in our effort to be virtuous, we should be comforted and encouraged by the thought that when our trial is over, we shall come to a happier condition, in which our reward will be according to our fidelity and patience. Then shall we receive more than abundant recompense for our toils. The thought of the heavenly reward should also act as an antidote against

the allurements of wicked passions. The thought of Heaven's riches should deter men from undue attachment to earthly possessions and gains, from fraud and avarice, and from discontent with a poorer station in life. The thought of Heaven's everlasting delights should teach man to abhor unholy satisfactions and all evil sensuality. The thought of Heaven's true and lasting glory should teach men not to be unduly elated by worldly distinctions, and to correct all evil motions of pride and ambition. The thought and desire of Heaven should also move men to that holiness of life by which the heavenly reward may be reached.

Devout Christian, be ever filled with a desire of everlasting happiness, and seek in all the circumstances of your passing life so to conform yourself with God's holy will that you may attain to it. Regret ever having lived without due care and consideration for your heavenly destiny. Beseech Mary, your heavenly Mother, to obtain for you the grace of a constant mindfulness of the future glory you hope for.

November 17.

OUR WISHES AT DEATH.

I. At death the glare and delusions by which the world may have deceived us, and seduced us from our allegiance to God and His Church, will vanish, and we will then acknowledge the extent to which we have been misled. We shall not then be able to live our life over again, and it will only remain for us to regret our faultiness, and to make the best possible preparation for our passage from this world. It will be profitable to consider now the feelings that will come over us then, and what our wishes or regrets will be then. It is quite certain that we shall then wish that we had never fallen into sin. We shall wish that we had never known what sin was, except to have hated it and avoided it. We shall wish that we had resisted strenuously in the time of temptation, and that after repentance we had not relapsed so often into sin. We shall remember with horror any habits of sin we may have contracted which deprived us of God's grace and friendship, and which perhaps held us in bondage even for years. We shall regret that we so often resisted the inspirations of grace, and so often disregarded the warnings of conscience. We shall wish that we had never caused sin in our neighbour, and that we had given edification by exemplary conduct, and not scandal by bad advice or irreligion. When we reflect on all this, do we not see that it would be wise to begin seriously now to save ourselves from so many regrets. Shall we, then, have the time or the means of making reparation when reparation is called for?

Devout Christian, regret now what you are sure to regret when death is at hand, and take care not to prepare for yourself subject for regret then.

II. Other thoughts will be in our mind besides the

remembrance of our sins when we come to die. Then will the truths of our holy religion strike us most forcibly. Then shall we recognize the fulness of God's claims upon our love, worship, and obedience. Men who have been slavish in their obedience to the world will see at death how little the world can do for them. Men who have scoffed at the idea of everlasting punishment will come then to have misgivings, and the mystery will be to them a cause for dread and alarm. Men of faith will see in clearer light the truth of the mysteries of redemption, of the Divine Eucharist, of the Church, and of eternal life, and they will wish that they had during their life thought more about them and profited more by the knowledge of them. It had been said to them: 'Whilst you have the light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of the light' (St. John xii. 36); but they had not heeded as they should. How many men, alas! understand but little about the truths of the faith, and their ignorance does not seem to cause them any anxiety or regret. Perhaps when they are drawing near death their conscience will smite them; but it will then be too late to supply for the neglect of the past. How many parents there are who will have to account not only for their own culpable ignorance of religion, but also for the ignorance of their children!

Devout Christian, desire ever to advance in the knowledge of God and of His ways. Do not deprive your soul of the benefits to be derived from sermons, spiritual reading, and pious reflections. Assiduity in profiting by these means of instruction will save you from many death-bed regrets.

III. When we come to die one regret will be common to all; we shall all regret that we have not loved God and our neighbour with a more sincere, constant, and practical charity. We shall then ask ourselves why we have not loved God more, and shown our love by the holiness of our life. The thought of the love of the Sacred Heart, and of the mystery of Christ's love manifested in the Passion and in the Holy Eucharist, will reproach us with our ingratitude and coldness. Why, we shall ask ourselves, have we seemed

to prefer the world, creatures, and ourselves, while the fountains of God's love were ever overflowing upon us, and pouring out upon us countless streams of Divine grace, mercy, and blessing? Why have we been so insensible to God's love. Yet others, less blessed in many ways than ourselves, have loved God more than we have loved Him! As to our neighbour, we shall see how seldom our love of him was disinterested. Then shall we regret our envy and jealousy, our rancour, our neglect, and many unkindnesses. We may, indeed, ask ourselves if we have fulfilled the precept of loving our neighbour as ourselves for the love of God, and if we fear that we have failed to do so, how late it will then be to supply in a real and practical way our neglect!

Devout Christian, it is written: 'O that they would be wise and would understand, and would provide for their last end!' (Deut. xxxii. 29). It would be wise to do now what at death we shall wish we had done. Recommend your remaining years to Mary, beseeching her to obtain for you the grace to sanctify them by holy living, and to make amends in that way for the faultiness of the past.

November 18.

DIRECTING OUR STEPS TOWARDS HEAVEN.

I. Christians should ever bear in mind that this world is not their lasting home, but only as a place of passage to their one eternal home, Heaven. What are all things created which at present fall under their gaze but as a rind concealing a providence of Divine love and beneficence and the Divine Creator Himself, Immense and Eternal, Who could draw all things to Himself? From Him, the First Beginning, all things are, and to Him, the Last End, must all things be directed. Christians have not here a lasting city; they must ever direct their steps to the one that is to come (Heb. xiii. 14). Foolish are men who fix their interests and seek their pleasure in this world without any regard to their eternal destiny, for such as these, while storing up perishable goods, do nothing to secure for themselves the imperishable blessings of everlasting life. Such as these, if they do not change their ways, will yet have to declare: 'We have laboured all the night, and have taken nothing' (St. Luke v. 5).

Devout Christian, let no passing distraction or vain allurement, let no earthly gain, however great, or any worldly pleasure, however fascinating, so far turn your thoughts from your heavenly and eternal destiny as to cause you to forget your duty to God and to your own soul. One false step in life may be fatal, and may deprive you for ever of the everlasting joys of Paradise. Let God be ever foremost in your mind, and His grace will preserve you from folly and from sin.

II. Although there are special times and seasons of grace which should not be neglected, Christians should yet consider it an everyday duty to direct their steps towards Heaven. Therefore should they every day be careful not

to wander from the path of a devout Christian life, and they should seek so to spend every day that it may be as another step taken in the direction of their heavenly home. Thus wisely to direct their steps would tend to keep the infernal foe at arm's-length from them, and would secure for their conscience a condition of peace, while it would also afford them motives for generosity in God's service, for fidelity to duty, and for patience under the trials of life. Christians following this wise course would receive an abundance of actual graces according to their needs, and they would be valiant and strong. Their daily prayer might be according to David's words addressed to God: 'Perfect Thou my goings in Thy paths: that my footsteps be not moved' (Ps. xvi. 5). Such Christians will not wait for special opportunities of doing great things for God and for Heaven, but by daily struggles and efforts they will secure rich merits for their everlasting reward.

Devout Christian, consecrate every day to God's service by a pure intention and by a fervent resolve, and every day will bring you nearer to your heavenly reward. Desire ever to be associated in this life with the just who hate sin, and who love the things that are pleasing to God, and you will be joined to their happy company in the heavenly home.

III. Let not Christians think that only ecclesiastics and religious are required to direct their daily steps towards Heaven, for to do this is the daily duty of all Christians in every state and calling and position in life. All, whether employed in the city or in the country, in important offices or in lowly services, have received their present life as a preparation for the glorious destiny of God's Elect, and Heaven is to be the reward of their present faithful service. Let none permit themselves to be drawn in the ways of evil, let none put this world's gains and pleasures before their heavenly and eternal interests, let none neglect those means of grace that are essentially connected with the work of their sanctification; but let all, no matter what may be their position in life, so direct their intentions and their affections, that all their works may be acceptable to God

and meritorious of supernatural reward. Alas! that so many men spend their days without any thought of God! Alas! that so many offend Him so often and in so many ways! How will it be with them when they pass from this present short and fleeting life?

Devout Christian, begin every day with an offering of yourself and of all your thoughts, words, and actions to God, and beg His grace to enable you to spend it well. Moreover, raise your heart to God at times during every day. Place yourself with piety and confidence under the protection of Mary, your heavenly Mother, and beseech her to obtain for you the true spirit of Christian service.

November 19.

ST. ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY.

I. Among the praises of the wise woman which we read in the last chapter of the Book of Proverbs is this: 'She hath opened her hand to the needy, and stretched out her hands to the poor.' In how many ways, and in this way in particular, St. Elizabeth showed herself a follower of that wise and valiant woman of Holy Scripture! Her piety and her practical charity have endeared her memory to the faithful. With her bright example before us we recall these other words: 'Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised' (Prov. xxxi. 30). From first to last in her life we see that St. Elizabeth did not care to keep anything for herself; she wished to bestow all her means upon the poor. As a child she gave them whatever money she had, as a princess her alms knew no bounds, and when, after the privations and poverty which followed upon her husband's death, she was restored to her just rights, she devoted her dower to the use of the poor. St. Elizabeth was not of the number of those well-disposed persons who write out their cheque for this charity or for that, but who have almost a dread of approaching the sick or the poor. No; she loved the sick and poor. They were the objects of her sincere sympathy, and she personally waited upon the sick even when they were afflicted with the most loathsome diseases. She served them in two ways, both with her worldly means and with her own hands, and she devoted much of her time to them.

Devout Christian, admire St. Elizabeth's truly charitable spirit. Learn from her to think of your neighbour's needs, and to supply them as far as you are able. The least you can do is to manifest your solicitude and your sympathy.

II. Charity springs from a deep and holy fountain.

We must love our neighbour as ourselves for God's sake. Charity, too, is more than a sentiment; practical help must accompany our sympathy where it is possible, and where is it not possible to some extent? There must have been something noble and elevating in the charitable pursuits which engaged St. Elizabeth to have attracted the heart of that pious princess. Ah! she did not think it enough only to say that she loved her neighbour as herself; she proceeded to prove the sincerity of her charity by her acts. St. James says: 'If a brother or sister be naked, and want daily food: and one of you say to them: Go in peace, be you warmed and filled: yet give them not those things that are necessary for the body; what shall it profit?' Of exalted rank as St. Elizabeth was, she yet made it her delight to seek out the very poorest, and to relieve them with her own hands; for she understood that charity, to be true, should be practical. She knew in what light the poor should be regarded. The poor have always been dear to the Saints. Let us not exhibit a horror of approaching them; let them not be trampled upon; let them not be railed off from the rest of society as though they were persons offensive and to be avoided. Let them rather be sought out, embraced, aided, and sympathized with. Their lot is hard enough of itself, without the additional hardship of neglect or contempt.

Devout Christian, ask yourself if you regard your needy neighbour with brotherly feelings. The holy writer says: 'Defraud not the poor of alms, and turn not away thy eyes from the poor. Despise not the hungry soul: and provoke not the poor in his want' (Ecclus. iv. 1, 2).

III. It is wrong to disrespect the poor. St. James condemns persons who show every mark of respect to a rich man in fine apparel wearing a gold ring, and who say to the poor man: 'Stand thou there, or Sit under my foot-stool.' Then the Apostle adds these words: 'Hearken, my dearest brethren; hath not God chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God has promised to them that love Him?' Yes; the poor are the friends of God; and even so far so that our Lord takes

as done to Himself whatever for His sake we do for the least among them (St. Matt. xxv. 40). In this light St. Elizabeth regarded the poor. To what devotedness it prompted her! She could not do enough for our Lord in the person of the poor. She preferred to wait upon them than to receive homage herself from the great in her princely court. St. Elizabeth became dear to our Lord by her charitable deeds. Genuine charity in the life of Christians gives that life its true character; it may be said to be to it what light is in the sun, what heat is in the blazing fire, what freshness is in the various colours, what perfume is in the flowers, what sweetness is in the voice, and what melody is in the song. Without charity something is wanting to the true character of the Christian life which no other quality can supply.

Devout Christian, seek in all your kindnesses to the poor and needy to act from pure motives of charity. Perform these kindnesses for our Lord to Whom you are so deeply indebted. Love the poor for His sake. Ask Mary, who shared the poverty of her Divine Son, to obtain for you a sincere compassion for the needy and suffering, and the grace of a true spirit of charity. 'Bow down thy ear cheerfully to the poor' (Ecclus. iv. 8).

November 20.

ALMSGIVING.

I. ALMSGIVING, which is one of the eminent good works, is strongly recommended in the Holy Scriptures. It is written: 'Defraud not the poor of alms, and turn not away thy eyes from the poor.' . . . 'According to thy ability stretching out thy hand give to the poor' (Ecclus. iv. 1; xiv. 13). The elder Tobias said to his son: 'Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person: for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee. According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly: if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little. For thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity. For alms deliver from sin, and from death' (Tob. iv. 7-11). St. Paul said: 'Do not forget to do good and to impart; for by such sacrifices God's favour is obtained' (Heb. xiii. 16). St. John said: 'He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall put up his bowels from him: how doth the charity of God abide in him?' (1 St. John iii. 17). The practice of alms-deeds is not altogether a matter of choice; its obligation is founded on the law of charity, which requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves for God's sake. If we ourselves were in need, we would wish others to be compassionate, and to help us. We must, therefore, be kind in the same way to our neighbour when he is in need.

Devout Christian, ever respect the teaching of God's Word, and ever seek to put in practice the lessons it teaches. Recognize the place which almsgiving should have among your good works. 'Alms delivereth from death, and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting' (Tob. xii. 9).

II. In order that our almsgiving may edify our needy neighbour, as well as furnish his wants, and that it may be profitable to our own soul, we should study to see in what spirit this duty is to be performed. We should endeavour that our assistance may be timely. Timely aid may prevent serious distress. We should therefore be happy to make ourselves acquainted with the needs of our neighbour, being careful, however, to avoid all officiousness and all rude investigations. When our immediate neighbours do not appear to be in want, we may exercise our charity by contributions to the support of orphans, or of the aged poor, in homes or other such institutions. Our guiding principle in going to our neighbour's assistance by our almsgiving should be one of compassion. Moved by genuine compassion, we will not leave it to others to render the assistance, as many men do who wish to shirk the charitable duty. We should remember that our Lord will take as done to Himself what for His sake we do in kindness towards our neighbour. A Father of the Church says that there is only one poor man, and that is Jesus Christ. It would follow from this, that whatever, for Christ's sake, we do to any poor man, is done always to Jesus Christ Himself. On the day of reckoning our Lord will say: 'As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me' (St. Matt. xxv. 40).

Devout Christian, purify your motives in whatever almsgiving you perform. Be resolved that according to your means you will practise almsgiving. Do not imitate those who frame all kinds of excuses when there is need to perform this duty of charity. Remember the day of reckoning.

III. When almsgiving is performed there is sometimes a fault, because it is not proportionate with the needs of our neighbour and with our ability to help him. The whole burden of assisting him may not rest upon us only; but we do not always bear, and bear willingly, our portion of it. Men often give to their needy neighbour only what is of no value to themselves, and they are unwilling to be at any loss, cost, or inconvenience in rendering him assistance.

This kind of almsgiving does not always meet the strict demands of charity. Almsgiving must be directed by discretion and generosity. These excellent qualities will lead to the exercise of our charity in a manner which is at once in keeping both with the means at our disposal and with the necessities of our needy neighbour. How hard are the hearts of men who will not even give him what they have no need of themselves! St. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to bestow their alms, 'not with sadness or of necessity,' but cheerfully, so as thereby to reap blessings for themselves: 'For God loveth a cheerful giver' (2 Cor. ix. 7). Solomon said: 'Cast thy bread upon the running waters: for after a long time thou shalt find it again' (Eccles. xi. 1). Our Lord said: 'Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward' (St. Matt. x. 42). These texts of Holy Scripture encourage us to perform almsgiving by reason of God's blessing and reward, which it will procure for ourselves—thus teaching us the twofold benefit of this good work. While by our alms benefiting our neighbour, we bring blessings upon ourselves.

Devout Christian, be resolved to perform almsgiving according to your opportunities, and according to your means, and purely for God's sake, and not for earthly gain or for men's praise. Remember our Lord's words: 'When thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth. That thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee' (St. Matt. vi. 3, 4). Ask Mary, your heavenly Model and powerful Advocate, to obtain for you the grace to perform all your good works purely for God's glory.

November 21.

OUR LADY'S PRESENTATION.

I. Holy Church teaches us to follow our Blessed Lady step by step in her most holy life. In the Feast of the Presentation she invites us to commemorate Mary's being taken to the Temple in Jerusalem to be there dedicated to God, and brought up in piety. Tradition records that this was done; and it would seem fitting that such a preparation for her high destiny should have been made in Mary's case. We see how St. John the Baptist was prepared to fulfil his office of forerunner to Christ by an austere life in the desert; but Mary was prepared to be Christ's virginal Mother by special privileges and graces, and by a life of holy retirement in God's Temple. Mary's soul replenished with grace in her Immaculate Conception, ever sought God in a perfect spirit of faith and devotion. She sought Him in the early morning of her admirable life, at a time when other children act in the dim light of a reason yet without power. It is written concerning Wisdom: 'I love them that love Me: and they that in the morning early watch for Me, shall find Me' (Prov. viii. 17).

Devout Christian, recall the early impressions of simple piety which your soul received in your childhood. Your soul was by them guided in its first steps in God's service. Pray that you may never disregard the holy inspirations of grace; let grace lead you step by step through life.

II. Mary, enriched beyond all other creatures with grace, was not so blessed by the Divine bounty as to be incapable of advancing in grace. Interior and exterior graces operated upon her pure, sensitive soul with more than ordinary force and effect. She was indeed a most beautiful and fragrant flower, but she was capable of blossoming in yet fuller maturity. She was the sweet-scented vine that was to

bring forth in its maturity the True Vine, Jesus Christ, the good odour of Whose doctrine and life was to be spread over the whole world. How sweet was ever the spiritual fragrance of Mary's virginity and of her piety, prudence, and other virtues! Of her, then, might be said what we read in the Book of Ecclesiasticus (xxiv. 23): 'As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odour.' In the sacred seclusion of the Temple, instructed in the doctrine of the Old Law, engaged in works of piety, associated with other youthful virgins, guided and trained by devout and prudent matrons, Mary's soul advanced day by day in grace, and in the spirit of prayer. Oh, that Christian parents would so watch over the early training of their children as to keep from them the knowledge of evil, and guide them in the ways of piety!

Devout Christian, seek to nourish piety in your soul, not only by receiving the Holy Sacraments frequently, but also by religious reading, by practices of piety, and by associating with good Catholics. These are exterior means by which grace is fostered, and they will help you to advance in virtue and piety.

III. It is believed that Mary lived within the precincts of the Temple until the time of her espousals to St. Joseph. She did not become weary of so restrained a kind of life. Love of vanity, self-love, and self-will were strangers to her. She loved God with her whole heart, and she desired to please Him alone. She had consecrated her virginity to Him, and the world with its riches and pleasures had no attraction for her. Of Wisdom it is written: 'Take hold on her, and she shall exalt thee: thou shalt be glorified by her when thou shalt embrace her. She shall give to thy head increase of graces, and protect thee with a noble crown' (Prov. iv. 8, 9). Mary was eminently a wise Virgin; and by the wisdom of her ways day by day she became ever more exalted spiritually, and ever more blessed with grace. The Holy Scriptures tell us in different places how God was well pleased with His people, yet we know how often they proved themselves unfaithful; may we not, then, feel assured that He was well pleased with Mary,

whose every thought was directed to Him ? Let us therefore rejoice in the honour to God which Mary's most holy life in the Temple rendered.

Devout Christian, take care not to grow weary in the service of God. God remains ever worthy of your love, and as your life runs on He ceases not to add to the number of the benefits which He deigns to confer upon you. Seek, then, to advance in fervour and in gratitude. Beseech Mary, the highest pattern of a life adorned with grace, to obtain for you a relish for those things which will make you more pleasing to God.

November 22.

THE SINNER DECEIVED AND DELUDED.

I. Our spiritual enemies are the devil, the world, and the flesh. God gives us grace to overcome them, and when we have done this, He crowns us with victory. The sinner falls under the seductions of these enemies, counting upon gain, and he becomes their bondsman. He is deceived and deluded; and often, hugging the chains of his slavery, he remains under the deception for many years. During those years he is deprived of the special blessings of Heaven, and of the joys and consolations of the just. Satan cannot make men sin, but he can tempt them. When he tempts them, he carefully diverts attention from the terrible consequences of sin, and he presents to their gaze a delusive prospect of pleasure and gain. But all the distinctions, riches, and pleasures of the world are not to be compared with the priceless treasure of God's grace, or with the heavenly inheritance, both of which they lose when they yield to his seductions. The sinner falls under Satan's deception, even as did our first parents. In their case how quickly they discovered the delusion! Our Lord has told us that the devil is a murderer and a liar (St. John viii. 44). Did Satan not prove himself a deceiver when he promised our Lord Himself all the kingdoms of the world if only He would adore Him? These kingdoms, with their riches and glory, were not Satan's to give. The sinner, heedless of our Lord's warning, does not watch and pray, and he falls under Satan's seductions. He believes when doing wrong that he will be happy, but he soon discovers that peace has departed from him, and he feels all the burden of his sin.

Devout Christian, beware of the specious pretexts for neglecting duty, or doing what you fear is wrong, which may present themselves to you. Examine and see if there is not therein some deception and delusion.

II. It may often happen that Satan deludes men into the belief that they are excusable if at times they fall into grievous sins; because he will suggest they cannot continue always in the path of strict virtue. Men must fall sometimes. This pernicious suggestion captivates the weak. How are sins, basely committed under this delusion, compatible with our duty to God, with the immense debt of gratitude we ever owe Him, and with His claim to our entire and constant love? How are they compatible with our dignity as adopted children of God, and as heirs of His glorious and most holy kingdom? The sinner, however, falls under the deception. What presumption there is in his conduct upon God's mercy! Who shall assure him that he will have time to repent, or that the grace of repentance will be vouchsafed to him? It may happen, too, that Satan suggests that the path of virtue is too difficult, that its requirements are too many, and that its obligations are insupportable. Human nature is unequal to what is demanded. Satan does not remind the deluded sinner that God's grace is able to afford us all the help and strength we need to meet all the requirements of all the virtues. Satan, moreover, represents in an exaggerated form what is required, and the difficulties and restraints attached to the practice of virtue. At the same time, he keeps from the sinner's view the unspeakable blessings and consolations experienced by the just in this life, and the everlasting, heavenly bliss which will be their portion hereafter. The sinner falls under the deception and delusion.

Devout Christian, God asks for servants who will be loyal, and who will not listen to the suggestions of Satan, or seek pretexts for yielding to base passions. Under every temptation of the Wicked One, say with our Lord: 'Begone, Satan!' (St. Matt. iv. 10).

III. The sinner is deceived and deluded because he regards things only in the light of his own foolish imaginings and impulsive affections. Do not these fall under the promptings of base passions and evil inclinations? The sinner would be spared and saved from seduction if only he opened his eyes to the lessons of wisdom and of good

example set before him, and his ears to the teaching and warnings of our Lord, of the Church, of the priest, and of his own parents and true friends. But he does not wish to see and hear what would be for his benefit. The sinner's evil propensities are bad masters by which to be directed; but he obeys them rather than the wise directions of reason and religion. This is a fatal mistake made under a vain delusion. Under the misdirection of his passions the sinner becomes so far blinded and perverted as not to see virtue and holiness in their true light. How true, then, are the words of Solomon: 'The way of the wicked is darksome: they know not where they fall' (Prov. iv. 19). Oh, that the sinner would examine fully, and without prejudice, both virtue and vice, with the secrets of both, and with all their consequences! In the light of such an examination would he not see how desirable and profitable is the way of virtue and religion—the way of God's holy commandments? Would he not see how fatal are the seductions of evil, and how he ought to avoid the occasions of sin?

Devout Christian, pray to God, saying with David: 'Thy justifications I will never forget: for by them Thou hast given me life. I am Thine, save Thou me' (Ps. cxviii. 93, 94). Your spiritual enemies only prepare snares for your destruction. Be attentive, therefore, to the inspirations and movements of grace. Ask Mary, your heavenly Patroness, to shield you from Satan's poisoned darts, and to obtain for you a constant love of religion and virtue.

November 23.

DELAY OF CONVERSION.

I. One of the most fatal temptations of Satan is that by which he leads sinners to put off their conversion, particularly when he leads them to promise themselves a death-bed conversion. We are told by our Lord to spend our lives in laying up treasure in Heaven; but Satan tells his dupes to leave until later on, and even to defer until the time of death, making provision for eternity. When 'the night cometh in which no man can work' (St. John ix. 4), it may be too late to do what has to be done; and, moreover, God may not then be propitious. He may not accept their tardy attempt to repent. St. Francis of Sales invites us to imitate the bees who, in the time of flowers, lay up their store for the winter. How would it fare with them if they failed to do this? How will it fare with men who waste and misspend their years? Sinners, alas! heedless of many warnings, remain unconverted while their years run on. Some vice holds them in bondage, or they have fallen into a state of neglect of God's worship and of spiritual things. God is offended, and His wrath hangs over them. His proffered mercy is disregarded. The last offer of it may have been made; but the sinner keeps on his evil way, approaching ever nearer to his doom. The devil whispers to his soul that there is yet time. When St. John the Baptist addressed the Pharisees and Sadducees, saying: 'Ye brood of vipers, who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come?' he added: 'Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of penance' (St. Matt. iii. 8). There was hope for them, if they performed becoming penance. What 'fruit worthy of penance' does the sinner propose to himself to bring forth, when he defers his conversion till the time of his last sickness? Will he know which sickness will be his last? Will he have time to repent? Will he be properly disposed? Will God's grace be vouchsafed to him, seeing how often and how long he has despised it? Will God's minister be at hand to assist him, and to absolve him? Behold some few questions which might be put to the sinner who defers his conversion.

Devout Christian, admire the long-suffering of God with sinners; but recognize the extreme folly of delay of conversion, and fear the sudden bursting of His patient anger (Wis. iv. 19). Be just with God if you wish to find Him merciful.

II. It is written: '*Now* is the acceptable time' (2 Cor. vi. 2). What hope, then, has the sinner who allows the acceptable time to pass by? Will he be better prepared to repent when his last sickness comes upon him? Even supposing that it is not too short to allow time for repentance, will the circumstances in which he will then find himself permit of serious attention to the condition of his soul? Or will not his whole thought be about the condition of his body and about his recovery? Is it likely that his conversion will be genuine—that to his sorrow for sin will be joined a true detestation of his wickedness and neglect, and a firm determination to lead a better life, if happily he should recover? Will not his mind be upset with anguish and alarm when he learns that his recovery is not expected, and that his end may be near? How disturbed, too, he will be when he sees the sorrow and confusion around him! How engrossed he will be with his state and with the directions of the physician which have to be carried out! Will not his brain, as well as his body generally, be worn out with weakness and worry? Will it not be all but impossible for him to collect his thoughts, and to examine his conscience, or, indeed, to make any spiritual effort? As to prayer, will he not say that he is too ill to pray? How, under these distressing circumstances, will he be disposed to make his peace with God? If the priest be at hand, what satisfaction will he have in judging of the dying man's dispositions, and how will his ministrations be received and corresponded with? But will the priest be at hand? Will he be summoned in time? Will the dying man be conscious when the priest arrives? He has lived in sin for years; he has deliberately delayed his conversion; is this any preparation for the extraordinary grace of a death-bed conversion? There might indeed be hope if some pious relatives and friends had prayed long and earnestly for him. Their prayers might be heard.

Devout Christian, devote yourself with constancy to the ways of piety in whatever station in life you may be; and if you have the misfortune to fall into any grave fault, do not defer your repentance. Pray often for the conversion of sinners.

III. A doubt about the sinner's death-bed repentance arises when we consider how unaccustomed the sinner is to prayer and to compunction. The doubt is lessened if he is in a conscious state, and able to follow the directions of the priest, and if he receives absolution in the Sacrament of Penance, and, finally, is anointed in the Sacrament of Extreme Unction; for it is of faith that, if repentant, these Sacraments reconcile a sinner to God. In other circumstances there may be grave doubt about the sinner's dispositions, and therefore about his salvation. It is written: 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy' (Rom. ix. 15). When God has departed from the sinner, His word is accomplished: 'I go and you shall seek Me, and you shall die in your sin' (St. John viii. 21). The devil suggests delay of conversion: is it put off till it is too late? Have we not heard of negligent Catholics, who have given scandal by their omission to hear Holy Mass and to receive the Sacraments, and by parental neglect in bringing up their children in faith and piety, who have been cut off suddenly? A mystery enshrouds the many sudden deaths we hear of, and it is not for us to seek to unfold God's designs in them, or to pronounce on the fate of the victims; but often they cause grave misgiving.

Devout Christian, lament the presumption of many sinners in continuing in their ingratitude to God, and in the base serving of the world and of their passions. While others who have imitated them in their fall have had remorse and have repented, they continue to add to their sins and thereby to increase God's wrath against them. In this way do they continue also to diminish the hope of their salvation. Ask Mary, the hope of the penitent, to obtain for you the grace to avoid the sin of presumption on God's mercy, and to preserve you in the fear of sin and of its consequences.

November 24.

GOD'S LONG-SUFFERING WITH SINNERS.

I. It is to some persons a matter of surprise that many sinners are found in the Church, and that God tolerates them. A false zeal might call for the immediate punishment of the wicked. Our Lord, by His parable of the good wheat and the cockle, would correct this false zeal, and lift up the veil which conceals God's mysterious tolerance. God, when looking upon the intermingling of sinners with the just, seems to say: 'Suffer both to grow until the harvest' (St. Matt. xiii. 30). Our Lord said: 'The good seed are the children of the kingdom. And the cockle are the children of the Wicked One. . . . Even as cockle therefore is gathered up, and burnt with fire: so shall it be at the end of the world.' The Eternal God tolerates the existence of the scandal for the time, but the day of His justice will yet come. God sows good seed, when He calls us to the state of grace. If we fall away from grace, it is because the cockle of sin finds its way into our heart. How does this falling away occur? It is accounted for by men's perversity: they neglect the means of sanctification; they fall under evil influences; they expose themselves to danger; they scandalize their neighbour; they commit various kinds of grievous sins; and they even relapse into sin after repentance. What a sad change takes place in consequence of such conduct as this! 'An enemy hath done this.' The enemies are Satan, bad companions, unrestrained inordinate affections, and evil passions. These enemies are obstacles to grace, and they cause many sins.

Devout Christian, recognize the good work of God in your soul, and His loving providence for your spiritual welfare. Will you expose yourself to cruel enemies who wish to wreck His work? David said: 'Why, O Lord, are they multiplied that afflict me? . . . I have cried to the Lord with my voice: and He hath heard me from His holy hill' (Ps. iii. 1, 5). Guard yourself by prayer.

II. In the parable we note that the enemy sowed the cockle during the night, while the men were asleep. The devil, in leading men into sin by various temptations, takes advantage of their unguardedness; and everything favours his success if men are usually careless and negligent. Moreover, as he conceals his wiles, and presents his temptations so favourably to the weaknesses of men that they do not reflect upon the sad consequences, it may be said that he approaches his victims under the darkness of night. How deceitfully he leads men into sin! He persuades them that such a thought or action, such affection or familiarity, such conversations or reading, such means or methods, such companionship or amusement, and such customs or habits, are permissible, when in reality they are morally wrong. Conscience is alarmed, and gives its warning, but the tempter suggests that this alarm arises from scrupulosity. Conscience soon becomes callous or false; moral darkness sets in, and the wrong conduct is repeated and continued. The fair field is thus oversown with cockle. The cockle is not always perceived at first; but moral perversity cannot remain always hidden, either from our own eyes, or from the eyes of others. How necessary, then, it is for us to be always on the watch—to watch over our mind and heart, lest, little by little, they be led astray by the devil, or by the leading of our evil passions. If we walk in the ways of piety and virtue in which we are trained in youth, if we follow the inspirations of grace, the field of our soul will yield the good harvest; but if we become neglectful and indifferent the enemy will oversow the field with wrong ideas, evil desires, and bad habits, and our soul will yield only cockle, fit for the fire. We may be left in our misery; and the longer we continue in it the stronger will the cockle grow; its seeds may choke all the good that is in us. God sees all this, and waits.

Devout Christian, be ever attentive to the warnings of conscience. Study well what is lawful and pleasing to God; and spurn the deceits of Satan. Be ever watchful against your spiritual enemies.

III. God's long-suffering with sinners is intended to

afford them time to repent; for He does not desire their destruction (Ezech. xxxiii. 11). St. Paul therefore warns them against abuse of God's patience. He says to the sinner who puts off conversion: 'Despisest thou the riches of His goodness, and patience, and long-suffering? Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance?' (Rom. ii. 4). The sinner may yet become a great Saint. Was it not so with the Good Thief, with St. Paul, and with St. Augustine? God also leaves sinners among the just, for the greater trial of the just—to try their virtue and fidelity, and to try their patience. In what glorious light does not virtue shine out when it has stood the strain of bad example, opposition, and persecution? We must not countenance the evil-doing of others, much less should we imitate it; but, in spite of it, we must pursue the right path. Charity should lead us to strive for our neighbour's conversion, if only by our good life and our prayers. Sometimes we may have the opportunity of offering advice. We should offer it, but with prudence and charity. If sinners are not converted within the time determined by God's goodness, the day of reckoning will come, in which they will be treated like the cockle which at the harvest-time is gathered into bundles and burnt. Our Lord said: 'The Son of man shall send His Angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all scandals, and them that work iniquity. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (St. Matt. xiii. 41, 42). The just must not therefore be scandalized if God permits the existence of sinners in His Church, as if their conduct was not known and would go unpunished, for God has His own designs and His own times in this.

Devout Christian, ever admire God's long-suffering. You have experienced it yourself. Pray that sinners may have time to repent, so that they may be saved. If they fail to avail themselves of the time allowed for repentance, they will most certainly be lost. Ask Mary, your heavenly Protectress, to obtain for you grace not to be contaminated by bad example, and to deal patiently and charitably with all sinners.

November 25.

THE TIME OF VISITATION.

I. Our present life is the period during which God offers us grace, and comes to us in many ways to aid us to attain to eternal life. We must not disregard His coming; we must not neglect to avail ourselves of the means of grace which He offers us. To do so would be to imitate the Jews who rejected our Saviour. The consequences of the persistent rejection of grace are very terrible. There is such a disorder as spiritual blindness. Men affected by it do not know the things that are for their peace; and having minds shrouded by the mists of unbelief, worldliness, or vice, they take the path that leads to their destruction. Even in their case God may mercifully visit them with warnings and with invitations, not willing that they should be lost; but, also, how often are these visitations disregarded! Of the Jews our Lord said: 'If I had not come, and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin' (St. John xv. 22). Thus, too, may our Lord say of heedless Christians, who disregard the time of their visitation. God is not bound to consider the sinner's convenience as to the time of his being willing to be converted; He is not bound to come again and again with His offers of mercy. How blind, then, is the persistent sinner if he does not recognize his peril!

Devout Christian, be attentive to the visitations of grace. God always comes to you for your own good. Only the unwise are heedless of these precious visitations.

II. Man's lifetime is only as a day in comparison with eternity. How important, then, it is, during our brief sojourn on earth, to avail ourselves of God's visitations! And few as our years may be, we cannot count upon them, for we do not know the number that has been appointed to

us. The prophet says: ' All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field ' (Isa. xl. 6). Some men deceive themselves, for they count upon a time to come which they never see. They put off to a future time their conversion, and their work for their salvation, or their turning to piety; but death comes in the meantime, and they are found unprepared for it. The measurement of our life is in God's hands; and our life, and the lives of all men, fit in the Divine plan which has not been disclosed to us. Short as our life may be, it has its utmost and far-reaching importance. During it we must labour to secure our reward and happiness in the everlasting life which will follow it. During it we are ' stewards of the manifold grace of God ' (1 St. Pet. iv. 10), and upon its close we shall have to give an account of our stewardship. Our lifetime is a time of grace and mercy, during which it is for us to sow for the heavenly harvest, and to repent and do penance if we have sinned. At death, for us ' Time shall be no longer ' (Apoc. x. 6); we pass to our reckoning. Then will it be too late to merit grace, or to repent of sin.

Devout Christian, lament the sad conduct of men who spend their lives without preparing for the future, and who do not heed the call of God to repentance. The eternal issues are before you. Thank God for the many graces you have received to prepare your soul for its eternal destiny, and ask for a continuance of the Divine aid and protection.

III. Our present life is the time of visitation. God bestows His graces now; He speaks His warnings and His invitations now. It is written: ' To-day if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts ' (Ps. xciv. 8). We may not hear His voice to-morrow, or ever again. Oh, if only our first parents had been faithful in their day of visitation, and the people in the time of Noe, and the Jews when our Lord Himself visited them in person, in their day; how happy it would have been for them ! But they failed, and their day passed away. God's punishments followed. Our Lord's day will come, and it will come unawares. Well will it be if that day shall find us dutiful, profiting of

our graces. Our Lord therefore says: 'Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching. . . . And if He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants' (St. Luke xii. 37, 38). Alas! that so many men held captive by spiritual indifference, by false notions of religion, by a spirit of worldliness, by evil association, or by bad habits, disregard God's claim on their worship and service, and fail to heed His invitations to a better life. These men neglect the time of their visitation. If they do not presently repent, woeful will be the consequences of their neglect.

Devout Christian, be ever attentive to the movements of grace. You have not yet attained the perfection to which God would lead you. It is written: 'The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forwards and increaseth even to perfect day' (Prov. iv. 18). Ask Mary, your heavenly Patroness and Mother, to obtain for you an earnest determination to follow the leading of God's grace, and to make a good preparation for the future.

November 26.

THE LAST JUDGMENT—I.

I. Our Lord has been appointed to judge men, and to pass sentence upon them. Too late will scoffers at religion and despisers of the Christian law seek salvation when the time for judgment shall have arrived. Our Lord Who came in lowliness to redeem men, will come 'with great power and majesty' to judge them. Then shall He 'send His Angels with a trumpet, and a great voice: and they shall gather together His Elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them' (St. Matt. xxiv. 31). 'The Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His Angels: and then will He render to every man according to his works' (St. Matt. xvi. 27). In the case of the Angels there was a period of trial, which was followed by awards according to their deserts. So shall it be with men. In vain would be our present trials, in vain, too, our merits or demerits, if no judgment were to be passed and no award were to be given. God teaches us distinctly that we shall be judged. But why should there be a judgment if no sentence will be passed? Let us renew our faith in God's eternal and unerring justice. David says: 'All the judgments of Thy justice are for ever' (Ps. cxviii. 160). The word of our Saviour, which foretold the general judgment of mankind, will surely come to pass.

Devout Christian, judge yourself now, and you will prepare wisely for that Divine judgment which all men fear. Add now to the fervour of your worship, and of your desire to please God in all your life, and you will make good preparation for the future judgment.

II. Who will be the Supreme Judge from Whose sentence there shall be no appeal? It will be the Son of God Himself, and the sentence will be final and everlasting.

Our Lord said: 'Neither doth the Father judge any man: but hath given all judgment to the Son' (St. John v. 22). This Divine Judge will be one Who is infinitely wise in the knowledge of the law and correct in its interpretation. In vain would men, if they were to attempt it, pretend to give to the law any but its true meaning; and in vain would they advance pretexts for breaking it. In that day of universal and final judgment there will be no obscurity or uncertainty either as to the requirements of the law or as to the offences committed against it. The wicked will acknowledge to the Judge: 'Our iniquities are multiplied before Thee, and our sins have testified against us: for our wicked doings are with us, and we have known our iniquities' (Isa. lix. 12). The time shall then be when our Lord 'both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts' (1 Cor. iv. 5). Then, too, will be the time to vindicate God's honour, sovereignty, and goodness, which have been set at naught, and the precious Blood of our Saviour which has not been regarded. All this will the Supreme Judge do upon that Last Day, in the fulness and unerringness of justice, as He will administer it.

Devout Christian, often pray to our Lord, saying: Sweetest Jesus, be not unto me a Judge, but a Saviour. Love now the ways of truth and virtue, and your heart will be proof against the seduction of evil. Cling to God and to His grace by the use of prayer and of the Holy Sacraments, that your heart may be strengthened.

III. Who shall be brought before the great throne of the Supreme Judge? At the Last Day, as it will be the day of general judgment, all men will be arraigned before our Lord, and upon all shall sentence be passed. 'All nations shall be gathered before Him' (St. Matt. xxv. 32). Priests and people, princes and subjects, rich and poor, must submit to the final judgment. It is written: 'Behold, He cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him' (Apoc. i. 7). Our Lord said: 'He hath given Him power to do judgment, because He is the Son of man. Wonder not at this, for the hour cometh

wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment' (St. John v. 27-29). If we believe in Christ, we must believe in these things concerning the general judgment which He so clearly teaches. All men will come forth from the dead and all will receive their sentence according to their works. No men, therefore, will be able to escape the judgment to come, nor will the wicked be able to flee from the wrath and punishment of God.

Devout Christian, be resolved never to make light of sin. All men will yet have to reckon with God. In vain will the wicked at the Last Day 'begin to say to the mountains: Fall upon us' (St. Luke xxiii. 30). Now is the time to turn with sorrow to God, and to bring forth worthy fruits of repentance. Beseech Mary, your loving heavenly Protectress, to obtain for you grace to keep yourself ever prepared for God's call, and to be among the servants who will be found watching.

November 27.

THE LAST JUDGMENT—II.

I. St. John wrote in the Apocalypse: 'I saw a great white throne, and One sitting upon it, from Whose face the earth and Heaven fled away. . . . And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne, and the books were opened: and another book was opened which is the book of life: and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hell gave up their dead that were in them: and they were judged every one according to their works. . . . And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the pool of fire' (Apoc. xx. 11-15). This prophecy concerning the last judgment merits to be pondered over. All men, young and old, must face the judgment-seat, and must receive judgment according to their works. All their life, all their works, will pass under judgment, and the impartial Judge will pronounce sentence accordingly. Often we forget what evil we have done; often we try to persuade ourselves that the wrong we did was not wrong. At the general judgment all our wrong-doing will appear, and all our sins will be seen in the deep dye of their actual malice.

Devout Christian, frequently repent of all your sins, and seek ever to atone for them by exactitude in observing God's law, and in fulfilling your religious duties. Then will your offences be no longer remembered, for the mercies of God will be outpoured upon you (Ezech. xviii. 22).

II. In the case of some men, there are periods of their life in which they scarcely ever think of God; in the case of others, there are habits of secret misdeeds. In both these cases sins are multiplied, and the sinner's malice is

increased by persistence. Men may reckon lightly of this now, but at the Day of Judgment the outrage thus offered to God will appear in all its magnitude. On that dread day no undue allowance will be made for the wickedness of early years, nor for the sinful follies of youth, now so readily excused or so easily forgotten; but all men will be confronted with the obligation they were under at all times of observing all the points of the Divine Law. Then will be made manifest the wicked thoughts and desires that were wilfully entertained, all complacency in evil of whatever kind, secret plans and machinations contrary to virtue and religion, the malice of men's hearts, and all perverse affections and ambitions. Then, too, will be brought forward for judgment all loose conversations, all immoral readings, all passionate and lustful looks, all enmities, and all acts and conduct contrary to charity, purity, and meekness. Judgment, finally, will be passed upon the scandal given, upon intemperance, injustice, and avarice, upon irreligion, unbelief, wilful denial of the Church and of the true faith, and upon all wilful abuse of grace.

Devout Christian, lament all your past faultiness, and renew your good resolution to avoid all the ways of evil. Pray with the repentant, who said: 'Hear, O Lord, and have mercy, for Thou art a merciful God, and have pity on us: for we have sinned before Thee. For Thou remainest for ever, and shall we perish everlastingly?' (Bar. iii. 2, 3).

III. There are many men who are sinners by reason of their neglect: they fail to do the things which they are under a strict obligation of doing. Their neglect will not escape judgment at the Last Day. It shall be said to them: 'You shall know that I am the Lord: because you have not walked in My commandments, and have not done My judgments' (Ezech. xi. 12). Perhaps, like the Pharisees, they have observed minor points, but have disregarded the weightier things of the law. Our Lord said to the Pharisees: 'These things you ought to have done, and not to leave those undone' (St. Matt. xxiii. 23). Our Lord tells us that judgment will be passed upon men who fail to do the works of mercy (St. Matt. xxv. 45, 46), and upon

men who bury their talents and fail to turn to account the graces bestowed upon them. How, then, shall men escape judgment who have neglected the duties of religion, who have wasted their time and energies in vanities and worldliness, who have hoarded up their wealth while they have seen others in want, and who have in various ways left undone what the strict obligations of their calling required of them? Would that all men would think seriously on the terrors of the Day of Judgment! Would that now they would put their accounts in order! Our Lord says to all of us: 'Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of man' (St. Luke xxi. 36).

Devout Christian, remember ever that you are hastening on to judgment. Judge yourself every day. To your Divine Master, and not to the world, you stand or fall. St. Paul said: 'To me it is a very small thing to be judged by you, or by man's day' (1 Cor. iv. 3). Pray to Mary to obtain for you grace to live prepared for God's judgment, and not to turn from the right way.

November 28.

THE CONDEMNATION OF THE WICKED.

I. The judgment of the wicked, in that final day which will be one, not of mercy but of justice, must necessarily be followed by their condemnation. They do not deserve to hear our Lord say: 'Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.' What, then, do they deserve? They have rejected God, and now at last God will reject them. Past for ever is the day of their scoffing at God's threatenings, of their despising His law, of their wicked mirth, of their senseless vanity and waywardness, and of their sinful indulgence. Now must a just sentence be passed upon them. How changed is their attitude now! Now they are 'men withering away for fear and expectation of what shall come' (St. Luke xxi. 26). Now they are to realize what St. Paul says: 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God' (Heb. x. 31). Now is the day of their just judgment and condemnation, to be followed by an eternity of woe, dishonour, and punishment. A despair, which they will never shake off, settles upon them, and they begin that mourning and wailing which will go on for ever.

Devout Christian, reverence God's just judgments. How valuable is the present time, in which sinners, by sincere conversion, may avert from themselves the wrath to come, and secure for themselves an eternity of bliss! Praised be the mercy of God!

II. Now does the unrepentant sinner recognize how foolishly he said: 'Darkness compasseth me about, and the walls cover me, and no man seeth me: whom do I fear? The Most High will not remember my sins' (Ecclus. xxiii. 26); for now has he to submit to everlasting condemnation for those sins. Oh, if only he had listened to the warnings

of his conscience, and avoided the ways of evil! Oh, if only he had sincerely repented of his sins! How different then would be his case! It is written: 'The grace of God and His mercy is with His Saints, and He hath respect to His chosen' (Wisd. iv. 15). The Last Day will be for all sinners one of unutterable anguish and confusion. They will be friendless and forsaken. They will, in vain, wish to flee from the wrath of the Lamb. The Sacred Heart of Jesus will cease to beat with love for them; Mary will never again intercede for them; and their loving Guardian Angel will leave them. Even their former wicked companions will curse them, and turn bitterly against them. All comfort, joy, and peace will have passed away from them, never to return. 'The Lord shall laugh them to scorn: and they shall fall after this without honour, and be a reproach among the dead for ever' (Wisd. iv. 18, 19).

Devout Christian, how great an evil it is to turn away from God by mortal sin, seeing that it causes God to cast away for ever from Him the creatures of His hands, whom He once cherished with His unspeakable love! Let it be yours ever to fear to offend Him, and ever to correspond with His love.

III. The last judgment of the wicked will terminate with the passing of sentence upon them. Divine revelation does not leave us in any doubt as to the terms or meaning of the sentence. It is written: 'Then He shall say to them also that shall be on His left hand: Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels' (St. Matt. xxv. 41). Depart, faithless ones, workers of iniquity, men heedless of My service and of your own salvation, blasphemers of My Name, depart. You shall never see the kingdom of light, peace, and glory; you shall never taste the joys of Paradise; you shall never again know happiness or experience any consolation. Depart into the kingdom of darkness, into the bottomless pit, into the furnace of fire, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (St. Matt. xiii. 42), to suffer there 'the punishment of eternal fire' (St. Jude i. 7). How terrible is this sentence! Now is the time to be

warned, now is the time for sinners to repent and to change their lives. Let them not be deceived, for God will not permit Himself to be mocked with impunity. St. Peter says: 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly from temptation, but to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be tormented: and especially them who walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government, audacious, self-willed, they fear not to bring in sects, blaspheming' (2 St. Pet. ii. 9, 10).

Devout Christian, let the revelation of these mysteries make you cling ever with faith, trust, and love to God. You will always be bright, safe, and happy, while you pursue with steadfastness the path of God's service, which is the way of religion and virtue. Place yourself anew under Mary's protection, and ask her ever to help you by her prayers.

November 29.

THE LOST SOUL.

I. The pages of Holy Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments, the inspired writings both of David and the other prophets, and of St. Peter and the other Apostles, make clear to us God's revelation of the punishment of the wicked. Our Lord tells us of their miserable and desperate lot, where He says that they shall 'go into Hell, into unquenchable fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished' (St. Mark ix. 42, 43); and that His sentence upon them will be: 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire' (St. Matt. xxv. 41). Let us imagine the bitter anguish and fruitless despair of a lost soul, seeing that it has brought upon itself this terrible doom of everlasting punishment. It acknowledges the justice of the sentence, but this only adds to its torments. The sudden and awful change in their condition appals the wicked; but it is irremediable, and this intensifies their desperation. Some are cut off in the midst of luxury and pleasure, others in the midst of honours and laudations, and others in the midst of riches and social enjoyment. Now they have left all these transitory things for ever, and they are plunged into the bottomless pit (Apoc. ix. 1), to dwell there for ever without comfort, without hope, and without any alleviation of their torments. They will eternally be in that state to which they are consigned by God's infinite justice, for they shall never render any satisfaction to merit any amelioration of their condition. In vain will the lost soul wish to have again for repentance some of the time it misspent on earth. Now it sees its folly and wickedness; when forgetting God and disregarding His commands, it thought only of worldly gains and pleasures, and even sought gratifications which were base and dishonourable. Oh! it will say, for these things I have lost God, Heaven, and myself. O false world, evil companions, degrading passions, slothful nature! to what have you brought me!

Devout Christian, see in this picture the evil end to which mortal sin brings the soul. The lost soul sees that all the past is as a dream, passed for ever from it; and that all its riches and pleasures on earth were illusory dross in comparison with the works it neglected which would have merited Heaven.

II. The lost soul will see that all its opportunities of securing its salvation have passed by for ever; and it will, with fruitless lamentation, curse its heedlessness of God's warnings. It will be goaded to desperation at the remembrance of the many inspirations received, the warnings and remorse of conscience, the lessons of God's Word, the advice of priests and of friends, and the thoughts suggested by good example and by sudden deaths, which in life it spurned and disregarded. These helps to conversion will never again be afforded it. 'Oh,' it will say, 'if only I could now receive the Holy Sacraments, assist at the devotions of the Church, read pious books, and avail myself of the intercession of Mary and of the Saints! Woe is me! The time for all this is passed. The gates of grace, mercy, and salvation are closed against me for ever. I have lost all the blessings that ever were mine, and the everlasting blessings which I might have secured for myself. The heavenly inheritance is passed from me; another soul will have my crown.' The lost soul will be only too conscious of its altered destiny. There will not be any redeeming feature in its misery, which it will bemoan, saying: 'I am tormented in this flame' (St. Luke xvi. 24). Its sufferings will be incomparably greater than any ever endured on earth. And the measure of its anguish will be heightened by the thought of the bliss of the Saints, which might have been its own, but which has been lost through its own folly and wickedness. Perhaps enshrined in glory are its parents, brothers, and sisters, ravished with Heaven's bliss and blessedness, while its own eternal lot is one of indescribable woe. They shall never even think of it again, for the memory of it shall have passed from them for ever.

Devout Christian, recognize in the punishment of a lost soul the misery which it has brought upon itself, according

to the conditions under which it was created. It has despised grace and salvation, and incurred the doom of all who despise God. God's just punishment has overtaken it.

III. Some men who are not members of the Church, and who disregard our Lord's clear teaching, falsely imagine that after some time the damned will come out of Hell. They forget that after the Last Day there will be no such thing as time (Apoc. x. 6): everything will be fixed and eternal. There will then be an eternity of bliss for the just, and an eternity of woe for the wicked. The lost soul, therefore, will feel all the anguish of knowing that there will be no end to its torments, no diminution of them, and no escape from them. Its state and condition is fixed and eternal. In vain, then, would it, if it so willed, demand of God to suffer even as many years as there are sands on the seashore, or drops in the ocean, if after those countless years it might be spared. We can suppose it saying to itself: 'Must I for ever endure this gnawing worm, this unconsuming fire, this unutterable anguish and remorse?' Yes, for ever. 'Must I for ever be associated with demons and with the reprobate, and hear this gnashing of teeth, this perpetual weeping, and these hellish blasphemies?' Yes, for ever. 'Must I for ever see and hear, and taste and feel, what is so utterly abominable and painful?' Yes, for ever. 'Shall I never see again the bright sun, the placid moon and stars, or any smile or friendly countenance?' No, never. Solace, joy, or relief are unknown in Hell. This picture is far from giving a full idea of the torments of the reprobate.

Devout Christian, think not to find anything comforting in the lot of the lost, who have brought upon themselves the curse of the Almighty. Do not, like men of a false religion, seek to alter the truth of God's revelation concerning this mystery. Learn from this revelation the inconceivable malice of mortal sin, and the great evil of committing it. Ask Mary, your bright heavenly Mother, to protect you from this great evil, and grace to feel true compunction for all your sins.

November 30.

ST. ANDREW.

I. We meet with St. Andrew in the Gospels first as a disciple of St. John the Baptist, and then as a disciple, and afterwards an Apostle, of our Lord. Our Lord, upon first seeing him, and being questioned by him as to His place of abode, invited St. Andrew to accompany Him thither, and even entertained him. The future Apostle relished our Lord's conversation and society, and we see how his charity led him to wish for others the same happiness. Having discovered the Messias, Andrew lost no time in bringing his brother Simon to our Lord; for he desired that our Lord might be more universally known. He charitably wished Simon to have the privilege of enjoying that knowledge and love of Jesus which he himself had already in some measure acquired. We, also, if actuated by true charity, having, by God's great mercy, become His children by faith and by grace, should be eager that men out of the fold may become children of the Church, and that such of her children as are in the state of mortal sin may be brought again into the state of grace. This would be to practise true charity—namely, the love of God, by becoming instrumental in extending His reign over souls, which, if saved, will sing His praises throughout eternity; and the love of the neighbour, by bringing him to the knowledge of the truth, or to the way of salvation, so as to enable him to reach a happy eternity.

Devout Christian, strive, according to your opportunities, to imitate the zeal of St. Andrew, which merited from Christ his call to the apostolic ministry. Our Lord loves souls, and desires their salvation. If this were not so, what would our own case be? Let us, too, be actuated by a similar charity, and we shall merit a great reward (St. James v. 19, 20).

II. St. Andrew, although he had become one of our Lord's disciples, continued to follow his usual manner of earning his living. He did not yet know how great in his regard were our Lord's designs. After some time these designs were made known to him, and we admire his promptitude in corresponding with them. The event is thus narrated by St. Matthew: 'And Jesus walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea (for they were fishers). And He saith to them: Come ye after Me, and I will make you to be fishers of men. And they immediately, leaving their nets, followed Him' (St. Matt. iv. 18-20). What an admirable example we see, in the conduct of these two glorious Apostles, of entire confidence in God's providence, of obedience to a supernatural vocation, and of devotedness to our Lord! St. Andrew, together with the other Apostles, accompanied our Lord in His journeys, and shared with His Divine Master the fatigue and privations attached to the work of His merciful mission. He listened to our Lord's many discourses, and drank in from the fountain-head the heavenly doctrine which was to enlighten and lift up mankind. After our Lord's ascension St. Andrew remained in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem for some time, until the division of the apostolic work in the then known world was carried out. He then laboured chiefly in Asia Minor, Greece, and Scythia, journeying almost incessantly in various directions, even amongst the fiercest tribes, to spread the kingdom of Christ. He edified all by the wisdom of his discourses, by his zeal, and by the eminent sanctity of his life.

Devout Christian, admire this great Apostle in his attachment to our Lord, and in his unflagging zeal. To you let Christ be, not as a hero of the past whose praises are in the pages of history, but as the ever-living sovereign King Whom all nations should know, worship, and obey. Do what may be in your power to make Him and His holy teaching known and revered; and if in no other way, do it at least by the efficacy of prayer, and by the example of a truly Christian life.

III. When we consider how the Apostles, when they were scourged, rejoiced 'that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus' (Acts v. 41), we are able to understand how St. Andrew rejoiced when he heard the sentence of his condemnation, and saw at a distance the cross upon which he was to die. His sufferings for his Divine Master were to close with a glorious martyrdom, and he was to pass to his Lord's everlasting kingdom. We can understand, too, why he did not wish his friends to intercede on his behalf to save him from death; and why, when his judge gave the order that he should be unbound from his cross, he prayed to God to prevent its being carried out. Seeing his cross, he deemed it a figure of the Cross of his Saviour, and he saluted it reverently and lovingly. The cross had no terrors for this sincere friend and disciple of a crucified Lord. 'I come to Thee,' he said, 'exulting and glad; receive me with joy into Thy arms.' He was not nailed to the cross, but bound to it with cords, in order that his sufferings and agony might be prolonged. His torments endured for two days during which he ceased not to pray and to preach the Gospel of his Master. We admire St. Andrew's loving devotedness to our Lord, and his unceasing zeal to win men to Christ. And in his martyrdom we admire his patience, intrepidity, and constancy. He loved the cross that was to be the means of his going to his Saviour Who died on the Cross. His example teaches us a lesson of constancy in professing our faith, in practising our religion, and in bearing persecution and opposition on account of our religion.

Devout Christian, study the constancy of the holy Martyrs. What cared they for the machinations of men? They would not deny their faith, even when they were faced with cruel torments and death. How often, alas! human respect causes modern Christians to blush for the same saving faith! Ask Mary, the Queen and Mother of Martyrs, to obtain for you grace to overcome human respect, and to be ever loyal to God in professing your faith.

December 1.

NEWNESS OF LIFE.

I. After every fall into mortal sin, there should, upon conversion, be a newness of life. Then will the soul experience true comfort, and feel that the dark night of sin has passed. We read that when our Lord was about to raise to life the daughter of Jairus, the multitude that was making a rout had first to be put forth (St. Matt. ix. 25). The sinner sincerely desiring conversion, must prepare the way to newness of life by putting forth, by repentance and confession, the multitude of his sins. From his mind and heart he must drive out all bad thoughts, and all desires of what is unlawful. From his way of life he must remove all bad habits; and he must, moreover, put away from himself all bad companions and all who would deprive him of God's friendship. Without these preliminary steps his conversion will not be complete and lasting. Men relapse into sin when they do not resolutely put away the obstacles to grace. When there is question of rising from a careless life, in which piety has been neglected, there is another multitude to be put forth—namely, many vanities, many ties to worldliness and dissipation, and many habits which foster self-love; for all these tend to make us forget God, and His claims to our fervent service. And many imperfections arising from pride, impatience, envy, and dislike of our neighbour, have also to be resolutely dealt with, because they lead us often into venial sin. Because the necessary effort to correct ourselves of these faults is not made, we remain always in the same condition of imperfection.

Devout Christian, recognize that the removal of the obstacles to grace calls for assiduous effort. There will surely be some remissness when this effort, united to prayer

and the practice of devotion, is not made. Ever direct your attention to the correction of your faults.

II. With the advent of grace will come the unbinding of the soul. It must be released from the bonds of spiritual death, and from the obstacles to spiritual life. Animation, strength, and energy must be restored. The hard ground must be softened, the resisting will must be overcome and made submissive to the discipline of a Christian life, and wayward and inordinate affections must be corrected and purified. The grace of conversion will do all this. Upon sincere conversion, we shall no longer be held in bondage by the delusions of the devil, or charmed by the insidious adornments of vice, or by the false glamour of worldliness. Light will be vouchsafed to us to take a right view of our duty to God, of our indebtedness to our Divine Saviour, and of our Christian dignity. Newness of life will follow these first-fruits of grace. It is not enough that we should cast from us the grave-clothes: coming forth from the region of death, we must now live again, and exercise the functions of life. The duty of prayer must now be fulfilled, the commandments of God and of His Church must guide our conduct, we must have the courage of our religious convictions, and we must make amends for the past by an edifying life. This will require that we should be attentive to the duties of our calling, and of our state in life; and that, according to our opportunities, we should approach the Holy Sacraments, and assist at the devotions of the Church. Men who manifest in this practical way their return to God, will not easily fall back again into mortal sin and into an indifferent manner of life.

Devout Christian, let no temptation to sloth or worldliness allure you from the path of piety. Piety brings strength to the soul, and is a strong bulwark against all the forces of evil.

III. This newness of life is a good preparation for eternal life. Let it only be maintained, and all will be well for eternity. What wonderful things grace can do! Life has now a worthy object in view. Different views, better sentiments, and holier affections will prevail. 'This day

is salvation come to this house' (St. Luke xix. 9). How truly this may be said upon the return of grace to the soul that had lost it! In its light the soul no longer takes the path that leads to sin, but the safe one that conducts it in peace and joy in God's holy service. Now does it appreciate spiritual things, and taste the sweetness of devotion. Now is it imbued with courage and patience under the crosses of life, and prepared to serve God in adversity as well as in prosperity. Now do humility and charity become real in one's conduct, and every effort is made to maintain kindly relations with all neighbours. Now is self-knowledge desired, so that faultiness may be known and corrected, and that leniency may be shown in regard of the faultiness of others. In these, and in such ways, does grace lead the soul in newness of life. The reign of order is once more established, and religiousness resumes its empire over the soul. 'The darkness is passed, and the true light now shineth' (1 St. John ii. 8). The 'old man' is put away, and the 'new man' has been put on, 'who, according to God, is created in justice, and holiness of truth' (Eph. iv. 24).

Devout Christian, ever desire for yourself the rich and consoling fruits of grace, that you may be in the Church 'the good odour of Christ' (2 Cor. ii. 15). St. Paul tells us that as Christ is risen, so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. vi. 4). Raised by grace, we must show forth its power, and we must not relapse. Ask Mary, whom we style the 'Mirror of Justice,' to obtain for you constancy in the ways of piety and virtue, and grace resolutely to avoid every danger of relapse or of falling from grace.

December 2.

DOING ALL THINGS WELL.

I. It is recorded that the witnesses of our Lord's miracles exclaimed in wonder: 'He hath done all things well' (St. Mark vii. 37). How truly was this said! Would that the same might truly be said of us! What perfection there was in our Lord's conceptions, designs, conversations, and actions! In His relations with His Heavenly Father, everything on our Lord's part had for object His Father's glory. We hear the Father, as though in acknowledgment of this, say: 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased' (St. Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5). And when our Lord's life was drawing to a close, He addressed His Father, declaring: 'I have glorified Thee on earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do' (St. John xvii. 4). In His relations with us, our Lord sought only to repair our misfortunes and to confer blessings. He might have said, as God of old said by His Prophet: 'What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard, that I have not done to it?' (Isa. v. 4). Hanging on the Cross, He declared that He had done everything for us, and sacrificed everything for us, when He pronounced His dying words: 'It is consummated' (St. John xix. 30). We contemplate with admiration what we know of the deep mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption, and of our Lord's work for mankind continued through His Church; and we, too, in wonderment exclaim: 'He hath done all things well': 'Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath done great things' (Isa. xii. 5).

Devout Christian, remember that you are a constant partaker of the rich and saving fruits of our Lord's magnificent works. Never forget your Divine Benefactor. Learn from Him to seek to bring all your works to their required perfection, and to labour always to do all things well.

II. In imitation of our Divine Model, we should strive to do all things well. Sometimes we neglect to perform what is of duty, and often we perform imperfectly what we attempt to do. Imperfections of one kind or another creep into most of our performances. We do not always conceive aright of what duty demands; we determine to do as little, instead of as much, as we can, that all may be done well. Sometimes our intentions vitiate what we do, because our actions are prompted by some unworthy motive. What little zeal and religiousness we bring to the performance of our duties to God and to our own soul! And how neglectfully we perform those of our state of life, and those which have relation to our neighbour! How often a spirit of selfishness, of vanity, or of idleness, spoils our works, and deprives us of much merit! We cannot be said to perform our works well if we do not strive thereby to please God; if we do not perform them with a good intention and with becoming dispositions; and if we do not use all the care and effort needed to perform them well. Many men, alas! act thoughtlessly, and many perversely, and their works are vain. Our works should be performed under a wise direction and under a wise control. It is written: 'He that rejecteth wisdom, and discipline, is unhappy: and their hope is vain, and their labours without fruit, and their works unprofitable' (Wisd. iii. 11).

Devout Christian, watch over your motives in all your works, and from time to time offer to God all you do, and the spending of your time, day and night. Then may you hope confidently for God's blessing on your works. Without this they will be unprofitable.

III. We should remember that we are responsible to God for everything we do, and that we shall one day have to render an account to Him of everything. This thought should weigh with us, and should lead us to endeavour to do everything well. In our efforts in this direction we shall ever meet with opposition from our spiritual enemies and from our own perverse inclinations. How truly has it been said that life is a warfare! It is written: 'The bewitching of vanity obscureth good things, and the wandering of

concupiscence overturneth the innocent mind' (Wisd. iv. 12). God's grace will, however, be our protection, if, using prayer and the needed effort, we strive to do all things well. How great is our responsibility! We are responsible for the use of our mind, our imagination, our affections, our senses, our talents, our time, our opportunities, and our worldly means. God, who bestows these, will demand how we have employed them. To some men Christ, our Judge, will say, as to the Bishop of Sardis: 'I find not thy works full before My God' (Apoc. iii. 2). If our works are to be well done, we must perform them fully, with a good motive, and with due exactitude and diligence; moreover, we must persevere in well-doing if we would gain our everlasting crown.

Devout Christian, be resolved to fight the good fight and to gain your crown. Prepare for the reckoning day by dutifulness in your duties to God, to your neighbour, and to your own soul. There is no satisfaction to be derived from neglect, omission, or remissness, in the fulfilment of duty, but much in doing everything for God, and in doing everything well. Ask Mary, your heavenly Model and Mother, to obtain for you grace to be ever assiduous in seeking to please God in all you do.

December 3.

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER.

I. We learn from the history of saintly men that God does not always employ for great works men who have been eminent for piety in their earliest years. St. Augustine of Hippo had grown to manhood before, moved by grace, he turned from the world to serve God. Similar was the case of St. Francis Xavier. We learn also from the same source how God often employs one Saint to gain another. St. Monica won St. Augustine, and St. Ignatius of Loyola won St. Francis Xavier. Ignatius and Francis met in Paris, where both were pursuing studies in philosophy, theology, and other branches of learning. Francis loved the world, and was fired with worldly ambition. After patient waiting and several ineffectual attempts to win him to piety, St. Ignatius at last gained a glorious victory over his resisting will. Francis came to see the vanities and dangers of the world, and at the same time the wisdom and advantages of serving God. St. Ignatius won him to God and to the great work he himself was then projecting. Francis became one of those first companions with whom St. Ignatius founded the Society of Jesus. Grace having wrought his conversion, there lay open before him fields ready to harvest. There was the field of his own heart which he tilled, using mortification, submission, and prayer; and there were fields at home and abroad in which he was to spend himself in arduous labours.

Devout Christian, admire the workings of grace in St. Francis Xavier, and learn to yield yourself to interior inspirations and to holy promptings. God has His loving designs for your sanctification. Be not heedless or inattentive, but desire ever to correspond with those designs.

II. At Venice and in Rome St. Francis, under the direc-

tion of St. Ignatius, devoted himself to various charitable works. He served the sick in the hospitals with great humility and charity. Finally, he travelled to Lisbon, and sailed for the East. During the voyage he laboured for the spiritual good of the sailors, and he took care of the sick. At Goa he found a wide field for his priestly zeal. The Christians disedified the natives by their disorderly manner of life, and no progress was made in converting the people of the country. During six months he laboured to instruct and guide the young in the practice of their religion, and to convert the adult Christians, and his incessant efforts were crowned with remarkable success. He then directed his steps to the native population in the southern portion of India. God signalled his efforts by granting the power of working miracles. Upon several occasions he restored the dead to life. Many persons who were sick recovered their health upon embracing the faith. The demands of the apostleship committed to him caused the Saint great fatigue, and they were accompanied by many hardships, and often by strenuous opposition; but his ardent zeal bore him up, and he always found time to refresh his soul with prayer.

Devout Christian, if you seek to please God in what you do, and fulfil devoutly the duty of prayer, God's blessing and aid will support you under your labours and cares. David sang: 'The Lord is my strength and my praise: and He is become my salvation. The voice of rejoicing and of salvation is in the tabernacles of the just' (Ps. cxvii. 14, 15).

III. St. Francis Xavier passed over to Malacca, and then visited various islands lying to the East. He returned by way of Ceylon to Goa, and finally sailed to Japan. His labours in that country afford most interesting reading. For the most part he was successful in making converts, but he met with much opposition. After another visit to Goa, he set his face to go into China, but he died before he reached the mainland of that populous country. While awaiting in the island of Sancian an opportunity to descend upon China, he was stricken with fever. During the days

of his last and painful illness he edified his companions by his calmness, his resignation, and his spirit of prayer. God comforted Francis with spiritual consolations as the Saint's end drew near. Finally, with prayer on his lips, and with his eyes fixed lovingly on his crucifix, St. Francis gave up his soul to God. Signal miracles occurred after his death, especially at Malacca, where the plague, which was raging, suddenly ceased upon the arrival of the Saint's body. Great as was his sanctity, St. Francis ever spoke of himself most disparagingly. His virtues, however, shone out in his admirable life, and inspired beholders with great respect and affection.

Devout Christian, recommend yourself to the prayers of St. Francis Xavier, the Apostle of the Indies. Desire to help the work of conversion which he began. You may do this by your prayers, and by contributing to the funds of the Association for the Propagation of the Faith. Beseech Mary, your heavenly Mother, to obtain for you grace to co-operate in some way in the extension of the Gospel of her Divine Son.

December 4.

'CAST OFF THE WORKS OF DARKNESS.'

I. WORKS of darkness are an obstacle to the most important work which should engage man's attention in this world—namely, the working out of his salvation. In preparing during Advent to celebrate with becoming devotion the great solemnity of Christmas, we must put from us all works of darkness. Holy Church reads to us in the Epistle of the First Sunday of Advent the words of St. Paul: 'Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light' (Rom. xiii. 12). We cannot return to the state of grace until we have sincerely repented of mortal sin; and our repentance demands our putting from ourselves the occasions of sin, and all bad habits which have caused our sins. To a mind illuminated by a lively faith, the commission of mortal sin is an evil and desperate act. No state is so dreadful and alarming as that of a man living an enemy to God through mortal sin unrepented of. We may term mortal sins works of darkness, because they extinguish the holy flame of Divine charity, because men hide them from the light, because they cast a gloom over the soul and darken its spiritual perception, because they lead to the kingdom of everlasting darkness, and because the Spirit of Darkness instigates men to commit them. These evil works destroy the holiness of a Christian life, and deprive those who commit them of supernatural merit.

Devout Christian, direct your attention during Advent to the correction of your faults, and to doing penance for any mortal sins you may ever have committed. Form your intention so as to direct your penances, and all your devotions during this season as a preparation for a happy celebration of the Christmas festival.

II. The mind of sinners is so far darkened in many cases

that they do not value things rightly. They often magnify into matters of importance what is of no account, while they make little of what is supremely important. If they have lost a sum of money, they cannot rest until they find it; but if they have lost God's grace, and consequently their right to Heaven, they are indifferent. If one of their new robes receives a stain, their mind is greatly upset; but if their soul is stained with deadly sin, the fact does not seem to trouble them. The faith of sinners often becomes less lively, and this accounts for their want of concern when their eternal interests are at stake. They become as men walking in darkness towards a fatal precipice. In preparation for a holy and joyful commemoration of our Saviour's birth, and that He may be, as it were, born again in our soul, Holy Church invites us to purify our hearts, during these days of Advent, by penance and devotion. To sinners especially does she send her message: 'Cast off the works of darkness.' Not only should they repent sincerely of their neglect and of their misdeeds, and approach the Sacrament of Penance without delay; but they should give effect to their good purposes of amendment by their resolute avoidance of the causes of their falls. These causes may have been evil companions, loose literature, unbecoming pastimes, dangerous places, or bad habits. Grace, if sought humbly and confidently, will be given to correct evil propensities, and to infuse into the heart a love of what is wise and good. Then will repentance be effectual: it will be accompanied by a change of life. Then will its fruits be seen in joy in well-doing, in a love of religion, and in a holy peace of mind.

Devout Christian, prepare the way for the graces of the Christmas season by greater vigilance over your interior dispositions and exterior conduct. Put from you tepidity in God's service, and pray for the grace of spiritual fervour. 'Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him with a perfect and most sincere heart' (Jos. xxiv. 14).

III. There are many works which keep sinners in darkness, deprived of the grace of Divine charity. There is a degree of pride which leads men into a spirit of indepen-

dence, and an unwillingness to receive the teachings of faith, and to submit to the holy discipline of religion. Men who are carried away from God by such pride as this seem to proclaim their own self-sufficiency; they neglect religious duties and practices, and they often fail in regard of their neighbour in respect, consideration, and meekness. There is the vice of impurity, which, like pride, has various forms and degrees. When it besets the soul and is not resisted, it corrupts the mind and heart of the sinner, and leads him to do what debases him in his own eyes, and, when others are concerned, in their eyes also. It often leads to intrigues, disturbances, and moral degradation. There is the vice of intemperance, which brings the sinner into a disgraceful slavery, and often leads to his temporal ruin as well as to spiritual destitution. It scandalizes little ones, and brings miseries into families. Moreover, it is very often attended by other vices, and by neglect of religion. There are other works of darkness, such as blasphemy, giving scandal, dishonesty, hatred, disobedience to the Church, angry strife, and fraud. All these may lead the soul into the dark night of mortal sin. Any one of them would be a serious obstacle to a proper preparation for the graces of the Christmas festival. Now is the time to escape from the power and sway of evil habits, and of all evil passions. Happy will repentant sinners be if they shall be able to present themselves before the Infant Jesus at Bethlehem fresh from victory over any such habit or passion, and released permanently from its fetters. Do they not recognize that by doing the works of darkness they become 'enemies to their own soul?' (Tob. xii. 10).

Devout Christian, while lamenting the blindness of sinners, and their undutifulness to God, be resolved by God's grace to strive for your own amendment. How far we all are from the perfection of the Saints! How often, and in how many ways, we are unfaithful to God! Now in this season of devotion should we watch over ourselves more carefully, and strive to correct our faultiness. Ask Mary, ever faithful to grace, to obtain for you grace to struggle effectually with your weaknesses and imperfections.

December 5.

'PUT ON THE ARMOUR OF LIGHT.'

I. In preparation for the Christmas festival we must put away from us every evil work or habit; and we should also beg of God to grant us an increase of charity. We do not know how many more Christmases we shall see. Let us strive to spend every one well. Let us not reckon the holy season of Christmas one of only social joy: it should, above all, be one of religious renewal. It is a time when we commemorate the coming into the world of God the Son upon His mission of salvation for us His creatures. We should be in dispositions to avail ourselves of the benefits of His coming. Now, by the same Divine mercy that drives sin from our soul, is effected at the same moment the restoration of the saving grace of charity. This grace is as 'the armour of light'; it may be regarded as the livery of the sons of God. Grace imparts to the soul strength, warmth, and beauty. It is termed a 'supernatural habit.' Habitual or sanctifying grace stamps and adorns every soul that is not stained with original sin or with mortal sin; and it renders the soul pleasing to God and fit for the heavenly inheritance. How precious, then, grace must be! As the armour of the soul, it renders it strong and formidable to Satan. The prayer of the soul in the state of grace brings down from Heaven the aid and protection which are so necessary to it in the warfare of life; and thus the soul feels strong, and is sustained in the contest. St. Paul said: 'I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me' (Phil. iv. 13). So also will it be with the soul clad in 'the armour of light.'

Devout Christian, recognize God's love and bounty in giving you His precious grace. Grace is your spiritual adornment and protection. Ever cherish it, and never

forget its priceless value. Seek to acquire an increase of sanctifying grace by prayer, by good works, by a fervent spirit of devotion, and by fidelity in approaching the Holy Sacraments.

II. It may be said that grace imparts warmth to the soul, just as a garment preserves the warmth of the body. Spiritual warmth is the fervour of charity. Charity compasses the soul about, and keeps alive in it the fire of its spiritual life. That life continues as long as the soul is in the state of grace; its fire may be increased, or it may die out. When men cultivate grace, and correspond with the actual graces so bountifully bestowed by God upon His faithful servants, the spirit of fervour is increased, and ardour in God's service becomes more active and effective. This effect of grace should not surprise us when we reflect upon what St. John teaches. He says: 'God is charity: and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him' (1 St. John iv. 16). Now, concerning sanctifying grace—which, being a supernatural gift, surrounded with mystery, is but little understood by us—it is difficult to speak with accuracy, and without figures. We may, however, represent it to ourselves as a garment of beauty which adorns the soul, even as the wedding garment of a bride; for by grace does God, as it were, contract spiritual espousals with our soul. To make our soul disposed for so honourable an alliance, God adorns it with spiritual gifts. How much, therefore, we should desire to be in the state of grace! And when happily in that state, how carefully we should guard our grace, lest by mortal sin we should break the alliance, and lose God's most precious gifts! Demons lie in wait to rob us of our treasure. They are jealous of a love they have forfeited—a love they shall never feel again—and they spend their malice upon us, to win our souls from God, and to destroy their spiritual beauty.

Devout Christian, prepare yourself for the Christmas festival by a fervent desire to correspond with God's love for your soul, and give effect to this desire by attention to holy inspirations, and by exactitude in fulfilling your religious duties and the duties of your state of life.

III. No earthly condition of wealth, splendour, or greatness is comparable with the lot of Christians who are in the state of grace. Clad in 'the armour of God,' let them lead lives worthy of their exalted state. But, alas! how often they fall away! and for what? To indulge a vicious inclination, to enjoy a sinful gratification, to acquire some unjust gain, or for the sake of some unlawful attachment. They cast away the grace and friendship of God for such unworthy reasons, and they bring upon themselves untold evils. Let not the coming Christmas festival find us in the wretched plight of men who have fallen from grace. Let us, by the aid of grace, strive to advance in fervour; let us frequently renew our good resolutions; let us aspire to a more perfect manner of life; and let us practise more earnestly Christian mortification. In this way shall we be associated with pious servants of God in every land, in preparing a joyous welcome for the King of kings, who will be once more mystically born among us. In the Old Dispensation prophets who were not to see their Saviour yet sighed earnestly for His coming; and shall we, who live after the consoling event, and who know Him by faith, and by Holy Church's teaching concerning His life and works—shall we commemorate the mystery of His coming without due preparation? May grace touch our souls! and may we recognize in a practical manner how it is of much more consequence to interest ourselves in this mystery than to pursue any earthly gain or pleasure!

Devout Christian, often direct your thoughts to the mystery which Holy Church is about to commemorate at the Christmas festival. With fervent invitations ask your loving Saviour to take up His abode in your soul; and by frequent spiritual Communions seek an increase of His love. Ask Mary, who was ever so faithful to grace, to obtain for you constancy in wearing 'the armour of God,' and in battling on the side of her Son against all the forces of evil.

December 6.

CHILDREN OF LIGHT.

I. TRUE Christians enjoy the title and privileges of 'children of light.' St. Paul says: 'For all you are the children of light and children of the day: we are not of the night nor of darkness' (1 Thess. v. 5). We are followers of Him Who, as God dwelling in 'light inaccessible' (1 Tim. vi. 16), came as the true light to enlighten every man that cometh into this world (St. John i. 9). This was the Eternal Word, of Whom St. John says: 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men'; and Whom we, in the Nicene Creed, declare to be 'Light of Light.' It was fitting, then, that light should manifest Him in life, and darkness in His dying. When His birth was made known to the shepherds, we read: 'The brightness of God shone round about them' (St. Luke ii. 9); and a bright star revealed the same event to the wise men. At His Transfiguration 'His face did shine as the sun'; and when He converted St. Paul, we read: 'Suddenly a light from Heaven shined round about him' (Acts ix. 3). But while He was dying on the Cross, 'from the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole earth until the ninth hour' (St. Matt. xxvii. 45). The prophets foretold: 'The people that walked in darkness, have seen a great light' (Isa. ix. 2); 'His brightness shall be as the light' (Hab. iii. 4). And our Lord said of Himself: 'I am the Light of the world' (St. John viii. 12). His followers are therefore children of light.

Devout Christian, lift up your eyes with faith, and trust, and love, to your heavenly Lord and Master. Acknowledge Him as your only guide. Rejoice in being a child of light and a follower of the True Light, and let Christ's teaching and example lead you securely amidst the difficulties and dangers of your present life. Be not as those who remain in darkness because they do not follow Him.

II. It is not enough that Christians should look upon our Lord as the Light of the world; they must know and study His teaching, and walk according to its wise and holy directions: then will they be truly children of light. St. Paul therefore wrote to the Ephesians: 'You were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk then as children of the light. For the fruit of the light is in all goodness, and justice, and truth' (Eph. v. 8, 9). How rich and glorious are these desirable fruits! Reflect also upon what St. John says: 'This is the declaration which we have heard from Him, and declare unto you: That God is light, and in Him there is no darkness. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He also is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin' (1 St. John i. 5-7). The path of the Christian life is one of light; it is that of which Solomon says: 'The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forwards and increaseth even to perfect day' (Prov. iv. 18). St. Paul describes it as 'the armour of light' (Rom. xiii. 12). Happy, then, are true Christians who love and practise the holy lessons of Christ's teaching, and so let their light shine before men as to glorify their Father Who is in Heaven (St. Matt. v. 16).

Devout Christian, ever love the holy light of faith, and rejoice in it. Bless and thank our Lord for the clear guidance of His teaching. 'Light is risen to the just' (Ps. xcvi. 11); open your mind to the heavenly enlightenment, and pray that it may ever be accorded to you for your comfort and guidance.

III. The present light of faith will be succeeded in the next life by the light of glory, which enables the blessed to revel in the vision of God. Our Lord said: 'He that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life' (St. John viii. 12); and again: 'Whilst you have the light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light' (St. John xii. 36). His followers are to be children of light, not only now, but also hereafter in

Heaven: 'Then,' He says, 'shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father' (St. Matt. xiii. 43). Of the heavenly Jerusalem we read: 'The glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. And the nations shall walk in the light of it' (Apoc. xxi. 23, 24). How happy are the faithful who walk now in the light, and who are comforted with the hope of enjoying the beatific vision! Men who live in wilful error, unbelief, or doubt, are in darkness. Why will they not seek the light? Has not Christ appointed a Church to teach all nations in His Name unto the end of all time? Why will some men not trouble to seek this Church? and why will others stand at the threshold, but not enter it? Why will men remain in mortal sin, which obscures spiritual vision now, and leads to that dismal kingdom of exterior darkness, where 'there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth'? (St. Matt. viii. 12).

Devout Christian, walk ever in the way of light; it is the way of peace, of joy, and of hope. How glorious is your destiny! Strive to live ever worthy of it. Beseech Mary, your heavenly Mother, to obtain for you a true and constant love of the holy faith and of its teachings, and grace ever to walk by its saving light.

December 7.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION—I.

I. The Church cherishes the dogma of Mary's immaculate conception. She rejoices that in all the children of Adam and Eve one has enjoyed entire immunity from original sin. That one was Mary. Holy Church proclaims that no stain of sin ever sullied her; that she was immaculate in her very conception; that this privilege was decreed for her through the application to her, in greater measure than to any other creature, of the merits of our Saviour's redemption. We therefore see a special meaning in the words of Gabriel's salutation: 'Hail, full of grace; the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women'; and in Mary's utterance: 'He that is mighty hath done great things to me.' How wonderful was the bountiful provision for Mary's sanctity and greatness in her creation, and in the gifts with which God endowed her! With what most glorious privileges God blessed this His beloved Daughter, destined to be the incomparable Mother of His own Divine Son! The tide of original sin which should overflow every other child of Adam should never reach her soul to sully it.

Devout Christian, praise the loving dispensations of God's providence in Mary's regard. Let the thought of the privilege of her immaculate conception impress your mind with fresh hatred of sin, and inspire you with zeal in avoiding whatever might sully your soul and render it offensive to God.

II. We see in Mary's immaculate conception the laying of the foundation upon which was to be placed the great corner-stone, Jesus Christ. A spotless and specially sanctified Mother should be prepared, before He, the Son of God, could assume our humanity. It was decreed that there should not be a Divine Incarnation until there had been

an immaculate conception. The Serpent should have no power over Mary: his head had to be crushed. God Himself had said: 'I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel' (Gen. iii. 15). This Divine prophecy was in the first place accomplished when Mary was conceived immaculate. While the Serpent was lying in wait, the prophecies could not be fulfilled. In vain, therefore, did Isaias pray, saying: 'Send forth, O Lord, the Lamb, the ruler of the earth' (xvi. 1). . . . 'Drop down dew, ye heavens from above, and let the clouds rain the just: let the earth be opened, and bud forth a Saviour' (xlv. 8). Mary must first come, all fair and without a spot; and then and thereupon shall the prophet's prayers be heard and answered.

Devout Christian, ever cast all your care with dutifulness upon God, for He has a care of you. Leave confidently and resignedly to Him the time and manner of His merciful aid. Rejoice with Mary in the blessings bestowed on her to prepare her for her exalted destiny.

III. We may apply to Mary the words of David: 'The Most High hath sanctified His own tabernacle' (Ps. xlv. 5). Holy was the ground on which grew the burning bush from which the Lord addressed Himself to Moses; and holy the Ark of the Covenant from which He heard the prayers of His priests; and holy, too, was the Holy of Holies, the place of His special dwelling (Ps. cxxxi. 14); but far holier was Mary, the spotless Mother who was to bring Him forth to the world. Through Mary were to be realized the wonders typified under the Old Dispensation, and the prophecies uttered for the comfort of God's people during the ages of waiting and expectation. If those things were pure and sacred, and exceedingly to be venerated, which were only types, what shall we say of Mary's sanctity and spotlessness, seeing that she was chosen and preordained by God to hold so close a relationship with our Lord in the realization of those types which passed away with the Dispensation which had witnessed them? How much more sacred than the burning bush, than the Ark of the Covenant, than

the Holy of Holies, was the living immaculate Mary, the Mother of the Divine Redeemer Who came to bring mankind reconciliation, grace, peace, and salvation!

Devout Christian, let your mind receive the impressions of faith and piety with which the teaching of the Church should imbue the minds of her children. Happy are you in holding the comforting and inspiring doctrine of Mary's immaculate conception. Ask your heavenly Mother to obtain for you grace ever to correspond with the lights and gifts bestowed upon you for your sanctification.

December 8.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION—II.

I. Mary's immaculate conception had special relation to the Person of Jesus Christ. If St. Paul was declared by our Lord to be a vessel of election (Acts ix. 15), with what words shall we declare the calling and mission of Mary, or describe the marvellous graces which became her as the elect of God (Cant. vi. 8) in ministering to the accomplishment of the Divine Incarnation? We rejoice exceedingly that Mary's calling in this regard in a manner necessitated her immaculate conception. The Divine Redeemer could not becomingly have been born of a mother who had at any time been sullied by sin. 'The Word was made flesh'; but wonderful as are the Son of God's condescensions in the accomplishment of this mystery, they have not brought His Divine Person into immediate contact with sin: He could not becomingly receive His humanity through a mother contaminated by sin. There should be a special and incomparable sacredness and spotlessness in His Mother: so was it decreed, and it was. Holy Church and all her children proclaim enthusiastically the glory and honour of our Saviour vindicated from the aspersion which error and heresy would cast upon them by disbelief in Mary's immaculate conception.

Devout Christian, rejoice in the promulgation of the dogma of Mary's immaculate conception, which has removed all doubt and silenced all questioning concerning this privilege claimed for her by the All-holiness of her Divine Son. Ever praise and follow the Spotless Lamb born of a spotless Mother.

II. The mission of our Lord on earth, to wash out the sins of the world, demanded this privilege of Mary's immaculate conception. God's decree contained in His words

to the Serpent, was: 'I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed.' This enmity would not have been real and complete if Satan had ever had Mary in any sense in his power through sin. Consider the prophecy of the Archangel Gabriel revealed to Daniel: 'Seventy weeks are shortened upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, that transgression may be finished, and sin may have an end, and iniquity may be abolished; and everlasting justice may be brought' (Dan. ix. 24). It declares our Lord's sacred mission to expiate sin! He is called by Gabriel the 'Saint of Saints.' How ill it would beseem Him, in view of His essential sanctity and of His glorious mission, to receive His humanity through a woman conceived in sin, or even stained with sin! The enmity between Himself and Satan should be shared by His spotless Mother; and in both cases it should in every sense be complete. The vision of the woman and the dragon recorded in the Apocalypse (chap. xii.) describes the dragon as seeking to injure the woman, but being unable. Neither was Satan ever able to obtain the least ascendancy over Mary, who, all-immaculate, brought forth the Lamb of God who was to take away the sins of the world (St. John i. 29).

Devout Christian, admire all the ways of God in the mystery of man's reconciliation. Seek to be ever free from sin. Love Mary because she is so beautiful in her holiness.

III. Let us, finally, regard Mary's immaculate conception as the first beginning of her sanctification. In Adam and Eve the loss of original justice opened to mankind the door that admitted all the wickedness and evils which followed the fall; but in Mary's case the incomparable gift of grace in her very conception opened to her the door through which came the countless rich gifts and favours afterwards bestowed upon her. We may describe this privileged grace as the first beautiful and precious stone of the edifice of her sanctity; other exquisite stones were added to it as time went on, until it was completed. We look admiringly upon the sanctity of the Apostles, Martyrs,

Confessors, and other servants of God; but Mary's sanctity began before theirs, and in every way excelled theirs. We may then address ourselves to Mary, saying: 'Many daughters have gathered together riches: thou hast surpassed them all' (Prov. xxxi. 29). Let all Christians proclaim with joy the magnificence of God's work in Mary, and commemorate with thanksgiving the wonderful privileges divinely bestowed on her.

Devout Christian, strive to enter into the true spirit of devotion to Mary. It will be rewarded with spiritual favours and heavenly protection. Beseech Mary Immaculate to obtain by her prayers that you may be drawn ever more and more earnestly in the way of Christian holiness, and find your pleasure in giving glory to God by fervour in your worship and dutifulness in your conduct.

December 9.

THE VALUE OF TIME.

I. We all may say with David: 'Behold Thou hast made my days measurable. . . . Surely man passeth as an image' (Ps. xxxviii. 6, 7). Time is ever passing from us, and our measure of life with it. St. Paul teaches us the value of time where he says: 'Behold, now is the acceptable time: behold now is the day of salvation' (2 Cor. vi. 2). God has given us our time in this passing world for a purpose: it is as a talent that must be turned to good account. Time must not be spent uselessly: it must not be misspent. It has been given us wherein to work out our salvation. It is for everyone of us the season of God's grace and mercy, and the appointed season during which we must store up the supernatural merits which shall obtain for us the heavenly reward. Time is the term of office during which we are to fulfil the duties of stewardship: it will be followed by the day of reckoning. Time should be spent religiously, virtuously, industriously, and peaceably. It has not been given us wherein to sin, wherein to serve the world as our master, wherein to abuse God's gifts, or wherein to seek pleasure at the cost of neglect of God's service. Time well spent will earn for us many temporal and spiritual blessings now, and everlasting happiness in Heaven hereafter. How precious, then, must time be!

Devout Christian, thank God for having given you so much time, and pray that the measure of your days may also be that of your earnest service of God.

II. Time is valuable because there is so little of it: our time on earth is short, and we do not even know how short it may be. It happens in the case of many men that they come to realize the value of time only at death when it is slipping from them. Then do they recognize how great

has been their folly in living only for this world, and in storing up only this world's goods. What comfort will they experience when they are then asked: 'Whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?' (St. Luke xii. 20). If they have spent their time in worldliness, in folly, in useless pursuits, or in idleness, what will their thoughts be when they reflect upon what they should have done, but have not done? If we lose the present time, shall we yet have time wherein to make good what we have lost? Ah, the future is not ours. Many men are cut off in their sins, because they have despised mercy and abused God's long-suffering. To the just there is not always given an extended measure of time. It follows, then, that all men should use wisely the present time, and that none should promise themselves an extended future. Perhaps the wood is already seasoning out of which our coffin will be made. But has the all-important work, for which we were created and granted life, been yet accomplished? How serious is this question!

Devout Christian, set a great value on the present passing time. So spend it that it may not cause you subsequent regrets. It is written of the wise man: 'He will open his mouth in prayer, and will make supplication for his sins' (Ecclus. xxxix. 7). Let this be your daily exercise morning and evening.

III. We shall spend our time profitably if we sanctify with a good intention, pleasing to God, all our ordinary actions; if we are careful to avoid sin; and if we devote to prayer, to hearing Mass, to receiving the Holy Sacraments, to hearing sermons, and to pious reading, that amount of time every day or every week which good Christians usually set apart for these religious duties. 'The night cometh when no man can work' (St. John ix. 4). Let us be in earnest now whilst there is light; let our prayers and our works emit that odour of piety and dutifulness which will render them acceptable to God; let us make amends for any disedification we may have given; and let us persevere with constancy in the way of a good life. Then may we count on receiving mercy from God, and His everlasting

rewards, let death come when it may. Our Lord assures us of this where He says: 'Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching' (St. Luke xii. 37). Those who value time, and therefore spend it well, enjoy even now many satisfactions, and escape many miseries and misgivings.

Devout Christian, learn from the Saints how to use the time of this present life. Consecrate yourself, your days, and your entire life to our Lord and to His Sacred Heart, that you may draw many graces and spiritual aids and comforts to console you in the uncertain and passing period of your existence in this world. Pray ever to God with sincere piety and conformity with the Divine will, saying: 'Thy kingdom come.' Ask Mary, your heavenly Patroness, to obtain for you grace to spend your time well so that your present life may be a fitting preparation for the everlasting future.

December 10.

DEATH.

I. David asks: 'Who is the man that shall live and not see death?' (Ps. lxxxviii. 49). No one can escape from death: all fall under the universal decree. It is a penalty. St. Paul says: 'Wherefore as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death: and so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned' (Rom. v. 12). Death is the passage between the present life and eternity. At death, Solomon tells us, 'Man shall go into the house of his eternity' (Eccles. xii. 5). There shall then be a separation of the soul from the body. The immortal soul will pass away, and enter alone into a new condition of being, and the body, no longer animated, will be a corpse. This is what is meant by death. Then is it seen that God is God. Unbelievers, blasphemers, scoffers at religion, cannot postpone the moment decreed by God for their death. God's sovereignty cannot be gainsaid any longer: His enemies must then declare themselves conquered. Then shall the tongue of the blasphemer be struck dumb; then shall the eyes of the lustful be rendered sightless; then shall the hand of the avaricious loosen its grasp; and then shall the drunkard, the worldling, and all who have despised God's laws, come to nothing, and yield up their soul at God's bidding. 'It is appointed for men once to die' (Heb. ix. 27). How solemn for the just, how terrible for the wicked, is the moment of death!

Devout Christian, do not count upon your present health and strength as indications promising you a long life. Our Lord says to you, as to all His disciples: 'Be you then also ready: for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come' (St. Luke xii. 40). Accept the warning humbly and thankfully.

II. It is written: 'All men have one entrance into life and the like going out' (Wisd. vii. 6). There are no exceptions to this common law, and at death all men are equal: all pass away as God's creatures, as Saints or sinners. The rich man must die even as the poorest: 'Death approacheth, and he must leave all to others, and shall die' (Ecclus. xi. 20). Whatever has to be done must be done before the soul quits the body; there remains afterwards only judgment upon what has been done, followed by the carrying out of the sentence that shall thereupon be passed. When death has come, it will be then too late to retrieve the past. The dead part with every one, and with everything. They carry with them to the judgment-seat only their deeds, and these have been good or bad, worthy of punishment or of reward. We should therefore be impressed with the solemnity and awfulness of the moment of death, especially for men who during life have given but little heed to the service of God. The time when death shall come is hidden from us, and this matter of its uncertainty should be regarded as a wise dispensation. We may not say that we shall die in such or such a year, because we know not but that death may overtake us even during the present year. Experience teaches us forcible lessons concerning the suddenness with which death sometimes comes. How many have left their home in the morning in health and strength, and have been carried back to it dead! It is thus the wicked are sometimes overtaken. David says: 'I have seen the wicked highly exalted, and lifted up like the cedars of Libanus. And I passed by, and, lo, he was not: and I sought him, and his place was not found' (Ps. xxxvi. 35, 36).

Devout Christian, let the certainty of death, but the uncertainty of its time, teach you the wisdom of keeping death in your thoughts. The holy writer says: 'In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin' (Ecclus. vii. 40).

III. We may ask ourselves when we should begin our preparation for death. Shall we wait until, when sick, we are told that there is no hope of our recovery? Ah! often, even when death is close at hand, the only thought of the

sick is about their recovery; they cannot be persuaded that they are about to die. Some men, guided by ordinary prudence, make their will in good time when they have reason to expect yet many more years of life; but the same men, forgetting their prudence, neglect the work of their salvation, and live as though they were never to die. Do they not wish to die the death of the just? If they do, they should lead the life of the just. It is written: 'A wise man feareth and declineth from evil. . . . The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to decline from the ruin of death. . . . The wicked man shall be driven out in his wickedness; but the just hath hope in his death' (Prov. xiv. 16, 27, 32). There have, indeed, been death-bed repentances, and penitents have found mercy at the eleventh hour; but we may not promise ourselves special dispensations of mercy if we have long resisted the inspirations of grace and many calls to repentance. The remote preparation for death must be a devout Christian life. God will not then disappoint our hopes. He will keep His Divine promises, and bestow His heavenly rewards.

Devout Christian, you have only one life to live, and one death to die. Let your life be a truly good one, and your death will be a happy one. You will die in God's grace, consoled with many spiritual blessings. Remember the words: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow them' (Apoc. xiv. 13). The good works of a good life will afford you the greatest consolation at death, and will be your best preparation for a happy death. Pray to Mary, the Mother of your Saviour, to obtain for you grace to make your life a fitting preparation for death.

December 11.

THE TRIAL OF BEREAVEMENT.

I. LIFE is a coming and going. The history of past generations is written in two chapters: one is entitled 'Life,' and the other 'Death.' Under these headings will our own record appear. Near the abodes of the living there must always be a burying-ground for the dead. We may be said to live among the living, the dying, and the dead. We do not know the term of our existence, but we are warned to be ever ready for our departure hence. Addressing God, holy Job said: 'The days of man are short, and the number of his months is with Thee: Thou hast appointed his bounds which cannot be passed' (Job xiv. 5). God reigns supreme over the kingdom of life and death: it is not in our power to remedy or undo the work of death. Only religion is our true comforter when death snatches from us those near and dear to us. Death is every day claiming its victims. Some are now lingering in sickness, and others are full of life who shall not see another year on earth. When these victims are persons dear to us, we should reflect that the decree of their departure is from God. He is the author of life: shall He have nothing to say to its duration? He has decreed the length of our days. Death may sometimes seem near, but it is averted and kept away until the moment decreed by God. When we are bereaved of relatives and friends by death, our first thought should be to submit dutifully to God's appointment. He is dealing with His own, and He is in His full right. Moreover, all His dealings with His creatures are in the order of infinite justice, and they must be right (Ps. cxviii. 137).

Devout Christian, recognize in bereavement one of the most trying of the sorrows of life. It is one which all have to experience. It is a penalty of sin, both for those who suffer death, and for the living who are affected by the death of their friends. It is written: 'God made not death, neither hath He pleasure in the destruction of the living. . . . By the envy of the devil, death came into the world' (Wisd. i. 13; ii. 24).

II. God is our First Beginning, and our Last End, and He has made us all for Himself. It should therefore comfort us to reflect that God Himself receives the souls of our departed friends. It is true that, in the case of the wicked who have abused grace and despised mercy, death is very terrible, and that it affords no consolation. The wicked bring their fearful doom upon themselves. But in the case of men who have striven to serve God the end is very different. Of these it is written: 'The souls of the just are in the hands of God, and the torment of death shall not touch them. . . . They are in peace' (Wisd. iii. 1, 3); 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints' (Ps. cxv. 15). We should reflect that our friends departed had of necessity to pass through the portals of death before they could enter into life; and that for the just death is the passage to the possession of God and to the everlasting bliss of the heavenly kingdom. Our present loss is their gain. We should not, therefore, wish their sojourn on earth prolonged, when we consider that God wills to bring them to their everlasting reward. It is question of loving the Divine Will, and of dutiful submission to it. And in this connection we may recall our Lord's words: 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me' (St. Matt. x. 37). In our bereavement we must bow our head in patient and loving submission. Behind the dark cloud the lustrous star is shining, though not seen. While we are lamenting, our friends, all unseen by us, may be in the bliss and peace of their everlasting abode. When our friends are taken from us, they would not wish us to testify to our affection by pagan sorrow, but by Christian resignation.

Devout Christian, when tried by bereavement, pray for grace to sanctify your sorrow. The trial affords you an opportunity of meritorious submission to God's will. It is not for you to ask why God has so done, in taking your friends from you, but to learn the lessons which God would teach you by their death.

III. When we lose our friends by death, we should offer

in their behalf the suffrages of the Church and our own fervent prayers. The doing of these things will afford us comfort. God's justice may claim certain satisfactions, but His love remains unabated and unaltered. If He must punish, He deals with the holy souls with the tenderness of the physician who has unwillingly to employ painful remedies. We should come to the aid of our friends with holy Masses offered for them. Holy Church, by her rites and ceremonies, inspires us with hope concerning our friends in the future life. The atoning Sacrifice, the dirge, the Cross, the lighted candles, the incense, and the prayers, inspire our minds with hope. 'Enter not into judgment with Thy servant'; 'Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord.' Over the tomb is raised the Cross, as a consoling sign of redemption and of triumph. Holy Church, in her offices, reminds us assuringly of our Lord's words: 'I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live.' When we depart from the grave-side, we carry with us the thought that death causes only a temporary separation, and that hereafter, in the bliss and joy of Heaven, there will be a reunion which shall never be broken. The condition of things will then be changed, and we shall love one another with the purest and holiest love in God. Let the death of our friends remind us of our own death. Solomon tells us that in the house of mourning 'we are put in mind of the end of all, and the living thinketh what is to come' (Eccles. vii. 3). We cannot put off death, nor can we escape it, but we can prepare for it. Happy will it be for us if it finds us ready!

Devout Christian, let the loss of your friends draw you closer to God. As they depart, the number of your ties to this life is lessened, and this should be to you as a lesson and a warning. But look forward with consoling hope to the great future in which there will be no partings and no bereavements. Ask Mary, the 'Mother of Sorrows,' who witnessed the death of One Who was her Son and her God, to obtain for you a spirit of devout resignation in your bereavements, and the grace to live prepared for death.

December 12.

'NO MAN CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS.'

I. We are created to serve God; and to love Him above all things 'is the greatest and the first commandment' (St. Matt. xxii. 38). No other master, and no creature whatsoever, must come between us and God. Yet there are men who forget their duty to God, and who serve the world, thus practically putting God in the second place. By the world, we mean the riches, pleasures, and distinctions of the world, sought inordinately. These are often accompanied by worldly ideas, and influences opposed to religion and Christian virtue, such as pernicious literature, slavery to fashion, and irreligious discourse. Many men are servants of the world, and they receive as a reward some temporal gain, some passing gratification, some mixed pleasure, or some slight distinction. They, however, do not wish to forego Heaven, so they pretend at the same time to serve God. Our Lord says that we cannot serve two masters. It happens that in their maxims, principles, and exactments the two masters, God and the world, are opposed to one another, so that evidently the two services are incompatible with one another. Experience also teaches that, through human perversity, worldly advantages often prove a snare to men and an obstacle to their salvation. In keeping with man's eternal destiny is the service of God; for this requires the observance of God's commandments, fidelity to grace, and the practice of the Christian virtues.

Devout Christian, be loyal to that holy service which is the most honourable, ennobling, and meritorious of all services. Say to your Divine Master with David: 'Thou art my God' (Ps. xxx. 15). Pray that no worldly allurement and no inordinate affection for any creature may ever lead you to be unfaithful to your only Master.

II. The world bids its followers strive in every way for wealth. It persuades them that if they have ample means, they are raised above every care, and are independent of everyone. Our Lord, on the other hand, blesses the poor in spirit. He Himself lived in poverty; and He bids His followers lay up treasures, not on earth, but in Heaven. The world bids its followers enjoy the pleasures and dissipations of the present life, and these often lead to the neglect of serious thought, and to gratifications that are unlawful. Our Lord, on the other hand, teaches us not to seek our happiness in this world, and He invites His followers to deny themselves, and to take up the Cross. He Himself embraced sufferings and humiliations. The world bids its followers labour for position and distinction. It urges them to strive to outshine their neighbour in style of living and in social standing. Our Lord, on the other hand, inculcates the necessity of humility, and of taking the last place. He invites His followers to learn of Him because He is meek and humble of heart; and He said of Himself: 'The Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister' (St. Matt. xx. 28). He fled from honours. The world, finally, bids its followers strive for men's esteem, and they consequently become slaves of human respect. They are guided in their conduct by what the world will say. Our Lord, on the contrary, teaches that we must give all glory to God, and make the doing of God's will the end of all our actions, regardless of what men may think or say.

Devout Christian, recognize the superiority of God's service over every other, and attach yourself firmly to our Lord's holy teaching. Let it be the guide of your whole conduct. 'Seek first the kingdom of God, and His justice.'

III. God will not accept a divided service, because such a service cannot be true and loyal. Every other master is inferior to Him in an infinite degree. To know what master we are serving, we have only to put to ourselves a few practical questions. Do we hate sin? and are we troubled when we have had the misfortune to offend God? What thoughts, and what sentiments and desires, are

uppermost in our mind ? Do we seek to make our duty to God subservient to our service of the world ? Is our mind more set upon the pleasures and gains of the world than upon loving and serving God ? Do we desire, with practical effort, to reach the kingdom of God, where we may enjoy God for evermore ? or are we satisfied with this world, even as though we would be sorry to leave it ? O Christians, death will presently come and remove all delusions. It will cut you off from everything in life, and hurry you before the judgment-seat of the only Sovereign, the supreme Lord of all. Then will you understand Who should have been your only Master. Then shall no one be able to take you out of His hands, and you will have to submit to His judgment. Happy will you then be if you have served God, and despised every other service. Be wise in time. Do not love this passing world to the prejudice of the loyal service you owe to God; for this would likewise be to the prejudice of your souls, and of your everlasting welfare in the life to come.

Devout Christian, renew the offering of yourself to God's service. Reject everything which might compromise your fidelity. Count the gain, as well as the labour and the conditions of this true service. Place yourself under the patronage and protection of your heavenly Mother Mary, and beg, through her merits and prayers, the grace and protection of her Divine Son, that you may attain to the reward of God's servants.

December 13.

THE BOND OF CHARITY.

I. Our Lord taught the necessity of mutual charity. No such golden bond existed in society when He came, and He knew that society could not be regenerated without it. Self-seeking, malice, covetousness, envy, hatred, and revenge cause disruption and contention, and they are incompatible with charity. Our Lord saw that the remedy and antidote for the disorders existing in society was charity. The holy Apostles, the messengers of the Gospel of peace, order, and love, sought ever to inculcate a spirit of perfect charity among their followers. St. Paul tells us that we should be seen 'loving one another with the charity of brotherhood'; and he says: 'So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another' (Rom. xii.). Therefore he tells us there should be 'no schism,' for we are 'the body of Christ, and members of member' (1 Cor. xii.). This bond of charity should exist universally, notwithstanding any difference of race, age, position, or temperament; for it creates a spiritual relationship which demands that we should love all mankind, and respect them all accordingly. Christian charity is very different from those preferences which are engendered by natural relationship, interest, or passion. Our Lord has established this spiritual bond, but it will be broken if the true spirit of charity does not reign amongst us. Charity must control our minds, our hearts, our speech, our dealings, our sympathies, and our whole conduct. When circumstances prevent our assistance of our neighbour, we should yet be disposed to render help, if only it were possible; and when our neighbour's faulty conduct merits blame, and even avoidance of him, we should yet wish him well, and we should be cautious in what we say of him.

Devout Christian, ever regard the bond of charity as something sacred, and as demanded by your character of Christian, and you will be careful not to injure it.

II. St. Paul says: 'Bear ye one another's burdens: and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ' (Gal. vi. 2). Our charity must not confine itself to a spirit of forbearance; it must go out to our neighbour in various ways according to his needs, whether they be spiritual or temporal. We may at all times pray for him. We should therefore do this when he asks our prayers, and when it appears to us that he needs them. We may at times be able to give useful advice, and when this is the case we should do it with willingness and disinterestedness; but we should be careful not to be importunate or officious in a matter of this kind. In times of sorrow and trial we may afford comfort by expressions and tokens of sympathy; and we should readily take advantage of such occasions, for sympathy conciliates esteem and cements friendship. When our neighbour is poor, and we are able in any way to relieve his distress, using discretion and careful not to cause pain, we should study how we may render him beneficial assistance, and we should do it according to our means, and according to circumstances. In a general way, we should show our neighbour consideration, and we should be ready to perform kind offices for him as occasions arise. In these ways may we bear one another's burdens, and give practical evidence of our charity; and these tokens of the reality of charity will make firm the holy bond.

Devout Christian, learn what your conduct should be in this important matter, not from a selfish world, but from what is inculcated by Gospel teaching, and by the glorious example of the Saints.

III. Charity requires that we should be patient in bearing with the peculiarities of character and temperament of our neighbour, and even with his faultiness. These things we cannot change; and if we permit them to irritate us, breaches of charity may follow. Wherever we may be placed, we shall be in contact with others, and subject to the annoyance of their peculiar humour. If we manifest

this annoyance, we may cause pain to our neighbour, and we may ourselves in turn become obnoxious to him. Gentle remonstrance is at times permissible, and even necessary; but acrimony and contentiousness must be avoided. Let us remember how God Himself, accepting Noe's sacrifice, testified to man's fickleness and faultiness, saying: 'The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth' (Gen. viii. 21). We, too, should remember this, and recognize that we ourselves have our own faultiness; then might we perhaps be willing to excuse our neighbour, or at least to show him forbearance. Let us also remember the example of our Lord living among faulty men, and bearing with them. Upon an occasion He exclaimed in remonstrance: 'How long shall I suffer you ?' (St. Mark ix. 18). How sensible He must have been of men's uncouth ways, and of their sinfulness ! for He saw into the hearts of all around Him. He yet bore with them. Let Him be our Model. We often see a mote in our neighbour's eye, while there is a beam in our own (St. Matt. vii. 3).

Devout Christian, be prepared to tolerate many things in your neighbour, and to suffer some mortification or annoyance, rather than to endanger the bond of charity. Such forbearance will render your charity highly meritorious. There are many who do not understand the duties of true charity. Ask Mary, your heavenly Mother, to obtain for you grace to know them, and to be faithful in accomplishing them.

December 14.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

I. Well might David ask: 'Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy face?' (Ps. cxxxviii. 7); for how shall we escape from the silent, ever-abiding, all-real presence of God? Whether we wish it or not, God is ever with us. He is more certainly and more constantly with us than the air we breathe. He is not with us as a figure or shadow, but in His own eternal and immense reality and essence. He is with us with all His attributes and perfections, for these are one with Himself, being inseparable and indistinguishable from His one, simple, and absolute Being. When we pray, when we labour, when we grieve, when we plan and design, when we think, speak, or act, and when we do good or evil, God is with us. When the wicked said: 'The Lord shall not see,' God answered by His Prophet: 'He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? or He that formed the eye, doth He not consider? . . . The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men' (Ps. xciii. 7-11). God is not in one place or in another, nor in one place and not in another; for He knows neither place nor time; He is immense, eternal, always and essentially everywhere. He is therefore within us and without, far off and near.

Devout Christian, God is ever with the works of His hands. Recognize yourself as His creature, not left alone, not independent of Him, but ever sustained by Him, and entirely dependent upon Him. Say with David: 'Thou hast formed me, and hast laid Thy hand upon me' (Ps. cxxxviii. 5). Let your worship of God be ever one of praise, confidence, and thanksgiving. He is ever with you Who alone can benefit you, and with Whom are both your temporal and eternal destinies.

II. The thought of God's abiding presence with us should both console us and inspire us. It should console us because of what our faith tells us of our relations with God. We are not strangers to Him, nor are we beings for whom He has no care. We are His own creatures, brought into being for His own purposes, for whom He has created the whole universe, and set it in order to serve us. More than this, we are His children, adopted through the Incarnation and Redemption of His own beloved Son, and sanctified by the grace of His own Divine Spirit. He cherishes us with a love that is at once fatherly and Divine, and He blesses us with countless favours. Peering, then, out of our own poor nothingness and misery, we see ever at hand, watching over us, and loving, blessing, and protecting us, God Himself. How consoling to us this should be! The thought of God's presence should also be an inspiring one, because of the wisdom of His dispensations, the lovingness of His designs, the tenderness of His perpetual providence, the bounteousness of His grace, and the plenteousness of His mercy. We feel that He is at hand Who has all things, and Who can do all things, and that He is with us, not to crush or harm us, not to make us fearful or miserable, but, on the contrary, to bless and defend us, to make us happy, and by His grace to lead us by wise and holy steps to an eternal recompense. All this should inspire us with love, gratitude, confidence, courage, and devotedness.

Devout Christian, make it your practice to recall from time to time God's presence. To be alone and desolate takes away joy. But you are never absolutely alone while He is present Who is more to you than all creatures. Say with David: 'I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me' (Ps. xxii. 4).

III. God's presence must be respected. It should impose on us a beneficial restraint, which need not, however, be a scrupulous or distressing one. Our relations with God should inspire us with filial love and respect, with dutiful reverence, and with whole-hearted confidence. He is at hand to receive our worship and to bless our works. But if we neglect our duty, if we yield to our failings, if

we think evil, or speak in a way to offend the Divine ear, if we repeat our falls, or expose ourselves to the danger of sin, God is there with us, and we cannot escape His all-seeing eye. The sinner pays no respect to God's presence. David says: 'The sinner hath provoked the Lord. . . . God is not before his eyes' (Ps. x. 4, 5). If we do not call upon God in our temptations, needs, and difficulties, we show a certain disregard of God's presence, for He is ever at hand to help us, and we should call upon Him, What can we do without Him? Holy Job says: 'With Him is wisdom and strength, He hath counsel and understanding. If He pull down, there is no man that can build up' (Job xii. 13, 14). O ever-to-be-worshipped Presence of God, warning us from all evil, instigating us to good, and inviting us to seek heavenly and eternal blessings, be Thou ever loved and respected!

Devout Christian, remember God's words to Abraham: 'Walk before Me, and be perfect' (Gen. xvii. 1), and be resolved to recall God's presence at the beginning and close of every day, and at other fixed times. Rejoice with a holy joy in His presence. Beseech Mary, whose precious life was one of union with God, to obtain for you the grace to walk piously in His presence, and to enjoy the spiritual blessings resulting from that admirable practice.

December 15.

SOLITUDE AND SILENCE.

I. Most men avoid solitariness, for they love society. Companionship helps and comforts us in our sorrows and joys. We should yet have our moments for religious thought and devotion. When we have arranged in our rule of life for these, there will yet be ample time left for our relations with our fellow-men. There are classes of men whose whole time is given up to worldly thoughts and occupations; it never enters into their mind that their soul needs spiritual enlightenment, and that they have spiritual energies which need directing and fortifying. Solomon says: 'All things have their season. . . . A time to keep silence, and a time to speak' (Eccles. iii. 1, 7). Our Lord usually instructed His Apostles in retired places away from the crowd; and when He would send down upon them His Holy Spirit, He instructed them to await the event in prayer and solitude. God speaks to the Christian soul when it frees itself from the disturbance of worldly and vain distractions. He seems to say what we read in the Prophet Osee: 'Behold I will allure her, and will lead her into the wilderness: and I will speak to her heart' (ii. 14). In our moments of recollection we are more attentive to the voice of grace, and better disposed to form good resolutions.

Devout Christian, do not permit worldly occupations wholly to engross your attention. Find your pleasure in entering into yourself at seasonable times and moments. In those moments of self-recollection the truths of our Lord's holy teaching will make a salutary impression on your mind, and you will relish spiritual things.

II. In the early Church many Christians left the busy cities and retired into places of solitude in order to avoid

the dangers of the world, and to devote their lives to prayer, the study of the Holy Scriptures, and manual labour. In these days of commercial activity there are yet vocations to the contemplative life; but men and women following busy avocations should also so arrange their days that they may have time for prayer, meditation, spiritual reading, and the reading of the New Testament. If circumstances should not permit of the performance of such pious exercises, it would yet be possible, even in the midst of worldly occupations, to practise to some extent interior recollection, and to recite short ejaculatory prayers. It should not cause surprise that so many men are unspiritual and worldly, seeing that so few nourish their minds from time to time with pious thoughts, or strive at all to strengthen their souls with spiritual nourishment. The Prophet said: 'With desolation is all the land made desolate: because there is none that considereth in the heart' (Jer. xii. 11). The worldly minded do not relish the counsels of heavenly wisdom, and they fall into many faults and follies.

Devout Christian, dispose your soul for heavenly lights and aids by cultivating a spirit of recollection. It was in the silence of the night that God spoke to Samuel, and that the youthful prophet, prompt to do God's will, answered: 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth' (1 Kings iii. 10).

III. Our Lord, in His sacred life, teaches us to love solitude and silence. How many were the years He spent in retirement at Nazareth, and how often during His missionary career He withdrew to solitary places to pray! We read, too, how, during forty days and forty nights spent in the desert, He joined fasting to His prayer. In these ways did He divinely nourish His human soul, and give glory to His Heavenly Father, and thus, too, did He set His followers an example. How silent He was in His sacred Passion! He spoke but seldom in the humiliation, suffering, and ignominy to which He was subjected. How many lessons we learn from the few words He did speak! Mary, Joseph, and subsequent Saints profited by the holy lesson of His silence. His love of solitude and silence

condemns men and women—and they are many—whose lives are lives of dissipation, unnecessary bustle and disorder, and perpetual conversation on worldly and foolish topics. Let such as these take to themselves God's message: 'If you return and be quiet, you shall be saved: in silence and in hope shall your strength be' (Isa. xxx. 15).

Devout Christian, study the lessons of love of solitude and silence taught by our Lord and by the Saints. Solomon says: 'The words of the wise are heard in silence' (Eccles. ix. 17). How many precious graces you will fail to receive if you do not practise interior recollection! Ask Mary, who loved retirement and recollection so much, to obtain for you the grace to avoid unnecessary exterior disturbances, and to practise interior recollection.

December 16.

SOME THOUGHTS ON GOD'S PATIENCE.

I. When we reflect that God made us, and that His designs in our regard proceed from His love and goodness—moreover, that He is our First Beginning and Last End—we have reason to be appalled at the sight of men's disregard of Him. Not only do they fail to worship Him and to keep His commandments, except in so far as it may please themselves, but they practically transfer to the world with its riches and vanities the allegiance which they owe Him. How widespread is indifference about religion! Why does not a desire to know God and the consoling truths of salvation fill the hearts of the young? Why do not men of mature years show appreciation of religion, and seek to please God rather than themselves and the world? Why are not the old ever eagerly counting the years that separate them from God and His everlasting kingdom? The answer is, because God is not known, loved, and served as He deserves to be. God's rights and claims are disregarded. Will God endure this disregard? Holy David said: 'Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered: and let them that hate Him flee from before His face' (Ps. lxvii. 2). Why, then, does God wait? He waits because He is patient. He stays the exercise of His omnipotence, and He postpones the sentence of His infinite justice, while by urgings and pleadings He strives to win to better ways those children of His who disregard Him.

Devout Christian, admire God's wonderful patience, and learn a lesson from it. He has been patient with you when you have forgotten your duty to Him; be, then, forbearing with your fellow-men when they slight you or forget you. Were there times in the past when you did not realize God's claims on your love and service? Thank God for bearing with you, and make amends now by zeal for religion.

II. When a man persists in disregarding God and the duties of religion, it becomes as evidence that he contemns God. How many men, alas! do continue to manifest this disregard! They either give God a secondary place in their regard, or they even disregard Him altogether. He may say, as of old: 'I have brought up children, and exalted them: but they have despised Me' (Isa. i. 2). What, then, will He do? He will do as of old. He will invite these undutiful children to repentance, that He may show them mercy and bless them with His favours. 'Wash yourselves,' He said, 'be clean, take away the evil of your devices from My eyes: cease to do perversely, learn to do well. . . . If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow' (Isa. i. 16-18). How consoling for the negligent should be the thought of God's patience! He does not delay calling them to judgment that He may pass upon them a severe sentence, but that He may give them time to enter into themselves and plead for His mercy. 'Therefore the Lord waiteth, that He may have mercy on you' (Isa. xxx. 18). He acts like a loving and patient father, who bears with troublesome children, but who warns them of what may yet happen if they do not amend their ways. Yet what punishment God has it in His power to inflict! And why should He wait? For He is God, and those who disregard Him are the work of His own hand, and children who are base and unworthy of Him.

Devout Christian, let the thought of God's loving patience draw you to Him with yet stronger bonds, and fill you with consolation and confidence. Pray that all the world may be drawn to love and serve Him with earnest and constant devotedness.

III. God restrains His wrath, but He does so for a purpose. It is written: 'They might have been slain with one blast, persecuted by their own deeds, and scattered by the breath of Thy power; but Thou hast ordered all things in measure and number and weight. For great power always belonged to Thee alone, and who shall resist the strength of Thy arm? For the whole world before Thee is as the least grain of the balance, and as a drop of the morning

dew that falleth down upon the earth. But Thou hast mercy upon all, because Thou canst do all things, and overlookest the sins of men for the sake of repentance' (Wisd. xi. 21-24). May God, then, be ever praised for His patience and long-suffering! and may men avail themselves of the time so mercifully granted for repentance! But, alas! many men are perverse, and they continue to disregard God, and they act as though He had no existence. For such as these it is written: 'Thinkest thou this, O man, . . . that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness, and patience, and long-suffering? Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance? But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath' (Rom. ii. 3-5). Sinners must not weary God's patience by persistency in evil. Let the just take comfort. If God is so patient with sinners, will He not be even more so with His servants who seek to please Him?

Devout Christian, while striving to serve God faithfully, there will yet be many faults and shortcomings. Repent of these with a confidence of receiving pardon. Let the remembrance of them, and the recurrence of similar faults, keep you in humility. Beseech your ever-loving heavenly Mother Mary to obtain for you grace never to fall away or to forget your duty to God, and zeal to make amends for so many men who do not honour, obey, and love Him.

December 17.

DUTY OF PARENTS.

I. St. Paul, having addressed himself to children telling them to obey their parents, went on to say: 'And you fathers, provoke not your children to anger: but bring them up in the discipline and correction of the Lord' (Eph. vi. 4). The Christian bringing-up of children is the chief of parental duties. Parents must indeed provide for the temporal wants of their children, but their duty does not end there. Children must be taught their religion; they must be taught to say their prayers, to go to Holy Mass, to receive the Sacraments, and to keep from every kind of sin; and they must be taught to be obedient, respectful, self-respecting, charitable, truthful, and honest. These lessons should be instilled into the minds and conduct of children by precept and exhortation, but especially by the good example of parents. The young mind is easily impressed both by precept and example; but when children grow up precept will have but little weight with them if it be not accompanied by example. It is written: 'Hast thou children? instruct them, and bow down their neck from their childhood' (Ecclus. vii. 25).

Devout Christian, recognize the importance of parental training. God makes parents His vicegerents: they are to train them wisely and assiduously, so that the children may be ranked, both in this world and in the next, as the children of God.

II. Parents should treat their children with affection and patience, and they should, according to their means, make every provision for the peace and comfort of the home, so that the mind of their children may not be embittered by unreasonable fault-finding, cruel correction, angry disturbances, or neglect in the matter of food,

lodging, or clothing. Children have their natural claims upon their parents for many things, and parents must dutifully acknowledge these claims, and meet them. How painful to the right-minded it is to see children snubbed and cuffed by their parents without any real reason, and treated by them as though they were always in the way! or to see them, through their parents' neglect, dirty, untidy, cheerless, and uncared-for! How, when such is the case, can parents have the fond love of their children? Parents must give instruction to their children, and they must also provide for their education. They must not send their children to schools where they will not be brought up in the knowledge and practice of the Catholic religion. In their own homes children must be trained in Catholic practices, and they must be guarded against associating with companions who would be likely to interfere with their faith or to corrupt their morals.

Devout Christian, learn from all this the serious charge which devolves upon parents, and the grave responsibility of parents who neglect their children's welfare.

III. Parents owe their children the charity of a judicious moral training. How comforting is the picture of children growing up in their innocence, and in all the candour and simplicity of a character unblighted by acquaintance with evil! Alas! if this innocence and candour should be lost through the neglect of parents! Parents must use watchfulness, and they must warn and correct. They must instil religious principles, and teach children the doctrine of God's rewards and punishments. Religion alone will offer promise of their dutifulness towards their parents, of their acting honourably throughout life, and of their finally saving their souls. Correction need not always be in the way of corporal punishment; sometimes restraints or prohibitions or denials of favours may serve the purpose. Parents should encourage their children in order to lead them to do good, or to incite them to make themselves useful, and to stimulate their efforts in study or work. Praise should be meted out very sparsely and cautiously. Parents should not show partiality in dealing with their children,

as preferences excite jealousy and dislike. They should also be careful in not speaking of their private affairs or on any unsuitable topics before their children.

Devout Christian, in dealing with children, be guided by these advices to parents. Children are sensitive and observant, and they easily receive impressions which may be attended by injurious consequences. Ask Mary, your heavenly Mother, to obtain for you a zeal for doing good to the young according to your opportunities.

December 18.

PREPARATION FOR CHRISTMAS.

I. When we reflect that we are drawing near to the Christmas festival, we lift up our head with confidence, because of the incomparable blessings which the actual coming of our Saviour brought to the world. We are all sharers in those blessings, and now, in only commemorating our Saviour's birth, we count upon receiving many spiritual favours. Let us renew our faith in the mystery of the Divine Incarnation, and in the benefits resulting to mankind from it. Through it hope comes to the sinner; and were we not all sinners? St. Paul says: 'For why did Christ, when as yet we were weak, according to the time, die for the ungodly? . . . But God commendeth His charity towards us; because when as yet we were sinners, according to the time, Christ died for us' (Rom. v. 6, 8). Our sins did not repel our loving Saviour, but drew Him towards us with the object of taking them from us. The mission He undertook in coming into the world was to be our Saviour, and to save us from our sins. Let us desire that this glorious mission may be effectively fulfilled in what is demanded on our part. Would that all men might be saved! Let a confident hope comfort us concerning our own case, if only we are earnestly endeavouring to correspond with grace. Our Saviour is God; through His infinite merits there is nothing wanting in regard of the satisfaction due to God for man's sin, or in regard of the means of salvation provided for us.

Devout Christian, recall with satisfaction the announcement of St. John the Baptist: 'The time is accomplished, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe the Gospel' (St. Mark i. 15). Let the light of faith fall upon the consoling event you are preparing to commemorate, and you will see reason to look forward with great joy to the Christmas festival.

II. Mankind was for several thousand years left in expectation of the coming of our Saviour. It was right that men should be made to realize the gravity of their sin,

and their own utter inability to meet God's terms of reconciliation, seeing that they were of themselves powerless to offer adequate satisfaction. Men had to abide the time fixed by God's eternal decree for the promised redemption. After the weary waiting, at last the Precursor came and fulfilled his appointed mission, and announced: 'All flesh shall see the salvation of God' (St. Luke iii. 6). Then all who believed his word did penance, and prepared themselves for the coming of the long-looked-for Saviour. They recalled the prophecies concerning Him, and rejoiced in the thought of the blessings that would attend His coming. Isaias had prophesied, saying: 'The land that was desolate and impassable shall be made glad, and the wilderness shall rejoice. . . . They shall see the glory of the Lord. . . . God Himself will come and will save you' (xxxv. 1-4). 'Say to the cities of Juda: Behold your God' (xl. 9). Finally, the promised Redeemer came, and He said of Himself: 'The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost' (St. Luke xix. 10). A remedy has been found for the great evil of sin, the wounds of fallen humanity have been bound up, and once more the door of our Father's house is open to us. These are the benefits the Christmas season will recall to our memory. Let us prepare by penance and devotion to welcome into our hearts our Infant Saviour, through Whom to mankind is restored the Father's blessing, and the treasures and joys of the everlasting kingdom. Let us be filled with gladness and gratitude every time we hear the words: 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us.' They remind us of the mystery of our redemption.

Devout Christian, see in the coming of Christ the unfettering of man from the base bonds of sin. Through His coming fallen man is to be lifted up, and called to sanctification. His mission is described in Zachary's canticle: 'To give knowledge of salvation to His people, unto the remission of their sins . . . to direct our feet into the way of peace' (St. Luke i. 77, 79). How joyful should be our commemoration of these blessings!

III. Our Lord spoke by David His prophet saying: 'Be-

hold I come' (Ps. xxxix. 8). This saying was fulfilled when our Lord was born. He came to fulfil the figures of the Old Law, and to supply their defects. The ancient rites would have been meaningless, if they had not their relation to our Divine Saviour, through Whom only they had value in God's sight. The kingdom of God on earth had to pass from the figurative stage to the higher and more richly blessed one of realization. We are now preparing to commemorate the opening of the new epoch—an epoch so full of meaning and of blessing for man. It opened with the birth of our Saviour. Truly may we now say: 'Now is the day of salvation' (2 Cor. vi. 2). The Prophet had prayed: 'Send forth, O Lord, the Lamb, the Ruler of the earth' (Isa. xvi. 1). At Christmas we commemorate the birth of the Divine Lamb, Whose Blood takes away the sins of the world. Hail, happy event, bringing hope and consolation to mankind! Let it never be forgotten. It is the birth of 'the faithful Witness, the First-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth, Who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood' (Apoc. i. 5). Our Lord comes, not only to take away sin, but also to add a lustrous dignity to man through His assumption of human nature. St. Paul points out our relationship to Christ where he says: 'It became Him . . . Who had brought many children into glory, to perfect the Author of their salvation, by His Passion. For both He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of One. For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren' (Heb. ii. 10, 11). How joyous, then, to us should be the commemoration of the birth of Christ, Who came to raise us up to the dignity of brethren to Himself!

Devout Christian, turn your heart with sincere and reverent affection to Christ, and let your love of Him move you to prepare yourself as best you may to celebrate the festival of His birth. Ask Mary, the 'Mother of Christ,' and the 'Mother of Divine Grace,' to obtain for you a proper understanding of your relations with her Divine Son, and of the duties of love and service which these relations impose on you.

December 19.

THE HOLY MASS.

I. God must be worshipped in the way He Himself demands. He has always required a reasonable and acceptable worship. We find that in the Old Law there were prayer and sacrifice. There is nothing less in the New Law, but the sacrifice is no other than that of the Body and Blood of His own Son. This is now the sacrifice which God demands—the sacrifice of which he said by His prophet: 'In every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My Name a clean oblation' (Mal. i. 11). The various sacrifices of the Old Law, prefigurative of the Divine sacrifice which procured man's redemption, were succeeded by the one all-atoning sacrifice of Calvary, which is now mystically renewed in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. The former sacrifices, having fulfilled their end, were no longer acceptable when once Christ had offered His life for men on the Cross, and now only that sacrifice is acceptable which commemorates and renews that Divine sacrifice. Christ has enriched His Church by the institution of the Holy Mass. Now, upon the Christian altar, with solemn and holy rites, the Only-begotten Son of God is offered again and again to His Heavenly Father.

Devout Christian, renew your faith in this admirable mystery. You, together with the priest and with the Church, may at every Mass offer to God this one acceptable sacrifice. With what faith and devotion should you not do this? Thank our Lord for what the Holy Mass is to you and to the Church.

II. In every Holy Mass there are offered in true sacrifice to God the Body and Blood of Christ. Christ's Soul and Divinity are concomitantly present with His Body and Blood. Christ, then, true God and true Man, is offered

in the Mass; He is both the Priest and the Victim of the sacrifice. How excellent and how precious, then, the Mass must be! The mystery surpasses all human comprehension. Let the minister who officiates for Christ be clad in sacred vestments, and let him perform the solemn rite with becoming reverence. Let the faithful who assist at the Holy Mass do so in silence, with prayerful piety, and in respectful attitude. Upon more solemn occasions let the choir render the holy liturgy in tones expressive of devout worship and jubilant praise. Before the sublime grandeur of the Christian altar, when the Holy Mass is offered, let all social distinctions be forgotten, and let there go up to God from all hearts in unison worshipful and sufficient prayer.

Devout Christian, love the Holy Mass, and assist at it as often as circumstances permit. Let your lively faith penetrate the things that are seen, and which obscure so solemn a mystery, to make you discern the Divine reality which they cover.

III. How admirable are the ends for which the Holy Mass may be offered, and how rich the fruits of the sacrifice for those especially who assist in offering it. In the Mass, sacrifice is made to God to acknowledge the service we owe Him of worship. We do not come before Him empty-handed to render our dutiful homage, but we offer the richest and greatest of all gifts and sacrifices, even His own Son. Through the same Divine offering we also thank God for all the blessings of His general and special providence; we offer satisfaction for our own sins and for the sins of the whole world; and, finally, we supplicate God to bestow upon us and upon all mankind the mercies and blessings we so much need. We receive as a fruit of the Holy Mass many graces. For example, our heart is moved to charity, to bear patiently the trials of life, to repent sincerely of sin, and to desire to accomplish God's holy will. Assisting at Mass is especially helpful to our spiritual welfare, and it obtains for us also many temporal blessings in as far as God may see that they will be profitable to us.

Devout Christian, enter into the spirit of the liturgy when you assist at Mass, and avail yourself of this great sacrifice to beg of God the blessings you desire. Seek to obtain through Mary's prayers the grace to assist at Mass with becoming dispositions, and to desire earnestly to participate in the holy fruits of this Divine sacrifice.

December 20.

THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE HOLY MASS.

I. The priest begins the Holy Mass by reciting the 42nd Psalm and the *Confiteor*. Confiding in God's strength, and comforted by His light and His truth, he will go to the holy altar, but not without acknowledging his manifold sinfulness. The faithful should share his pious sentiments. At the Introit he utters with joy of heart words of praise and trustfulness, and then at the 'Kyrie eleison' he cries repeatedly for mercy. These cries are followed by the 'Gloria,' which is one of the sublimest of the hymns of praise and invocation which are found in the liturgy of the Church. Up to the Offertory, and from the Communion to the end of the Mass, the various parts are read aloud, but from the Offertory to the Communion the parts are mostly read secretly. The 'Gloria' is followed by the Collects or Prayers belonging to the festival, and by the Epistle and Gradual. The readings from the Holy Scriptures are intended not only to furnish the mind with instruction and holy thoughts, but also to teach the faithful in what reverence they should hold the sacred writings.

Devout Christian, admire the beautiful order of the Holy Mass, and enter into the prayerful and reverential spirit of the liturgy when you assist at Mass.

II. When the Missal has been removed, the faithful stand up to listen with respect to the words of our Saviour read in the Gospel. This holy reading comforts the mind, and affords an occasion of renewed attachment and loyalty to Christ's holy teaching. It is often followed by the recital of the *Credo*, during which priest and people reassert their faith in the whole doctrine of the Church. The priest then proceeds to prepare and to offer the elements of the

sacrifice, which he does with various suitable prayers repeated at every Mass. The secret prayers follow, and then the Preface. The Preface is a hymn of praise in which the Church on earth joins with the Church in Heaven, saying: 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.' The canon of the Mass then begins. Let reverence be intensified as the priest prays for the living, and commemorates the Saints who are in glory, and implores their intercession. With several signs of the Cross made over the elements, the priest now comes to the Consecration. The words of Christ Himself are pronounced, and the stupendous mystery is accomplished. Christ's true Body and true Blood are upon the altar.

Devout Christian, can you conceive anything more admirable, or any act of religion more sublime? Assist at the Holy Mass as though you were present at the sacrifice on Calvary. Unite yourself to Christ in the offering of Himself on the altar.

III. The priest in the prayers which immediately follow the Consecration begs God's gracious acceptance of the Sacrifice, and he then prays for the faithful departed. Again he commemorates the Saints, desiring to be admitted into their holy company. Then follows the *Pater Noster;* for as the Holy Mass is both a sacrifice and a worship of prayer, it is only becoming that the Lord's Prayer should have its place in it. Before coming to the partaking of the Body and Blood of our Lord, the priest prepares himself by invoking our Lord's mercy at the *Agnus Dei*, and by other special prayers in preparation. The 'Domine, non sum dignus' announces the Communion, in which the priest receives the Body and Blood of Christ consecrated in the Mass. The faithful then receive Holy Communion. The priest cleanses the chalice, and washes his fingers that have touched the Sacred Host; and having read various prayers from the Missal, he imparts the final benediction. A last Gospel closes the Mass.

Devout Christian, study at greater length the various parts of the Holy Mass. It is truly astonishing to find

such a display of worshipful and devotional matter compressed in so short a service. Beseech Mary to obtain for you a great love of the Holy Mass, in which her Divine Son so often renews His all-atoning Sacrifice, and in which her own sweet name is several times repeated with honour and love.

December 21.

ORIGINAL SIN.

I. The doctrine concerning original sin is the key to an explanation of many perplexing problems of life; it explains, for instance, why this life is not one of pleasure and repose, but a life of labour and care, and why we must die. The history of original sin is the history of man's fall from original justice. Consider in what a happy condition man was established by God's goodness at His creation. He had, as one of the objects of His existence, some end suitable to his nature, a natural end belonging to his life in this world. He was created capable of enjoying what God had made in that special order of creation to which he belonged. He was created to be happy in the earthly paradise, to praise God in His works, and to taste an earthly peace. If only all this had been the compass and extent of man's end, destined for us as well as for our first parents, we should be for ever grateful for it; but God superadded other and nobler ends, which we term 'supernatural'; namely, after his career in the earthly paradise, man was to pass to the enjoyment of everlasting life with the Angels in Heaven. In view of this supernatural end, God endowed and enriched him with becoming gifts and graces. These were gratuitous and superadded to such gifts as were proper to his natural being and calling—namely, original justice, integrity (or exemption from concupiscence), infused knowledge, immortality, and happiness. Grace operated freely upon man's mind and heart, and all his senses were completely under the control of his reason.

Devout Christian, call to mind all these wonders of Divine munificence with sentiments of admiration and gratitude.

II. Feelings of dismay should deluge our soul when we proceed to consider that man failed when placed under a

simple trial that was to prove his fidelity and to be the occasion of his meriting Heaven. He fell into sin, and thus incurred God's punishments. God drove him out of Paradise, despoiled him of the gratuitous gifts, and condemned him to a life of toil in exile, and to death. St. Paul said of the mystery of original sin: 'By one man sin entered into this world' (Rom. v. 12). Not only did Adam, by his own grievous sin, fall; but, without any personal fault on their part, his children and all his race, our Blessed Lady only excepted, were to inherit his sin and his disgrace. Having fallen from original justice, and having been despoiled of immortality and of supernatural gifts, Adam could not bequeath these things to his children. The whole race fell in Adam and with him. Sin and its consequences became the inheritance of the children of men, so that all men are conceived in sin. Sin, along with its penalties, passes by way of generation to all Adam's posterity, but not to our Blessed Lady. Our faith in this doctrine lifts the veil that conceals the malice of sin and the punishment it deserves.

Humble yourself, devout Christian, because you are a member of a fallen race. Be willing to submit yourself to the losses which result from man's fall; they are more than repaired by the graces which follow our Lord's redemption. Be content to feel in this world the humiliations attendant upon original sin. God will turn them to your advantage. But always detest sin as the greatest of all evils, and the source of all miseries.

III. Consider some of the penalties which original sin has brought upon man. We are considering it in man before the Divine remedy was applied. Man's fall from grace brought him under the yoke of Satan, thus, as by a double reason, causing him to incur God's anger and indignation. Man's nature was thereupon degraded, and this penalty involved both soul and body. In punishment of his fall, man's body was made subject to diseases, inconveniences of various kinds, sufferings, death, and corruption, and it became a cause of conflict with his spiritual being and welfare. His soul received four wounds—namely,

ignorance in the mind, malice (or tendency to evil) in the will, weakness, and concupiscence. Through the wound of weakness man became inconstant, and likely to yield to temptation; and through that of concupiscence he experienced a tendency to sensual pleasures or gratifications, accompanied by inordinate affections and desires. Not only did man, by his fall, lose the friendship of God, but he lost likewise the heavenly inheritance. How sad, then, was his condition! and he was powerless to remedy it. What an object-lesson as to the malice and terrible consequences of sin is afforded by the history of man's fall from original justice!

Devout Christian, recall this sad history with sentiments of grief that God's love and munificence should have met with so ungrateful a return; and on your part be determined by God's grace not to prove unfaithful in your duty to God. Pray to Mary, who was conceived without sin, to obtain for you a constant detestation of sin as being the worst of all evils, and a fervent sense of your duty to God, with a desire to accomplish all the purposes for which He gave you being.

December 22.

REPARATION OF THE FALL.

I. God's tender mercifulness in regard to man is seen in the decree that man's fall should be repaired, in the speedy promise of his redemption, and in the manner in which it was to be effected. God, Who cast off the Angels that fell and drove them from His face for ever, opened the arms of His mercy to man upon his sin. It was beyond Adam's power to offer him any adequate satisfaction for his sin. Adam could, indeed, submit to God's punishments, but that would be something very different from offering adequate satisfaction. The wisdom of God mercifully devised a way of reparation that would more than compensate Himself for man's sin, but the first Adam was not to effect it; it was to be accomplished by the Only-begotten Son of God, Who, assuming human nature, was to become the second Adam, and Who, as man, was to suffer and die in order to redeem the human race. Our first parents were not left long in the misery of their suspense; for shortly after their fall God called them, and revealed to them this comforting mystery of His love and mercy.

Devout Christian, admire the wonders of God's merciful dispensations seen in the reparation of man's fall. Unite in spirit with David in praising and thanking God, 'Who forgiveth all thy iniquities: Who healeth all thy diseases: Who redeemeth thy life from destruction: Who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion' (Ps. cii. 3, 4). Will you ever doubt His love, or fail in your trust in Him?

II. God indeed told our first parents that, in consequence of their sin, they should experience hardships and death; but He restored them to His friendship, and made them once more heirs of Heaven and of eternal life. These unspeakable blessings became theirs in view of the infinite

merits and infinite satisfaction of Christ's redemption. How admirable are God's ways! How incomprehensible is His love! God, Who is our Creator, deigned to become also our Redeemer. The prophet said: 'God Himself will come and save you' (Isa. xxxv. 4); and St. Paul, after this stupendous event, said: 'God indeed was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself' (2 Cor. v. 19). The fulfilment of the promise of the coming of the Divine Redeemer was deferred for several thousand years. It was right that the world should prepare itself for so stupendous an event by a long period of expectation, and that time should be given to men to become sensible of the unworthiness of their conduct towards God, and of the greatness of the evil of sin. In the meantime God made ample provision for man's salvation, in view of the Redeemer's future merits; but a richer and more copious bestowal of graces was reserved for the Church upon His coming, and these graces we now enjoy under the New Dispensation (2 Cor. iii. 9, 11).

Devout Christian, rejoice in the glorious dispensation of Redemption, by which adequate satisfaction was rendered to God, and by which salvation was restored to man. You owe every blessing, past, present, and to come, to your Divine Redeemer. Praise Him for His goodness, and attach yourself for ever to His service. He is your only Hope.

III. Christians should ever bear in mind and thankfully commemorate the fruits of redemption. Through it God displays His infinite mercy in opening to man a sure way of complete reconciliation; through it our Lord triumphed over Satan, and destroyed the decree of man's condemnation, Christ, as St. Paul tells us, 'blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us,' which He took out of the way, 'fastening it to the Cross' (Col. ii. 14); and through it our Lord obtained for us too the means of triumphing over Satan and over everlasting death, restoring us to a condition of hope, and making us once more heirs of the eternal inheritance in Heaven. In creating human nature (as the Church commemorates in the Holy Mass) God wonderfully dignified it, but through Christ He

has yet more wonderfully renewed it, so that we may in a certain sense become partakers of His Divinity. We see therefore, finally, that through the mystery of Redemption honour and dignity have been added to our nature, and we have been made members of that exalted, spiritual, mystical body of which Christ is the head. Truly, then, did Isaias prophesy: 'You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains: and you shall say in that day: Praise ye the Lord, and call upon His Name: make His works known among the people' (Isa. xii. 3, 4).

Devout Christian, open your heart in fervent thanksgiving to God for all the blessings bestowed upon you as the fruits of redemption. Thank your Divine Saviour through Mary His Mother, and beseech this heavenly Mother to be ever your Protectress, that no power of evil spirit or of worldly attraction may ever be able to withdraw you from the love and service of God, lest you should fall again under bondage.

December 23.

REAPING THE FRUITS OF REDEMPTION.

I. It is not enough that Christians should know what happy fruits result from the Divine mystery of redemption, or that they should admire them. They cannot truly rejoice on account of them, and enjoy them, unless they seek to profit by them, and thus reap them for themselves. Our Lord said: 'He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life everlasting' (St. John iv. 36). We must be in the state of grace if we would be the good ground and bring forth fruit a hundredfold, sixtyfold, or only thirtyfold (St. Matt. xiii. 8). Our Lord said: 'He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit' (St. John xv. 5). And we must use the means of obtaining grace, and of increasing our grace. If we neglect to employ the means, we shall be left in weakness and in want, and we shall be overcome. This will be of our own fault, for abundant fruits of grace are stored up for our enjoyment. St. Paul says: 'God is able to make all grace abound in you: that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work' (2 Cor. ix. 8).

Devout Christian, seek to make yourself rich and strong through the abundant fruits of redemption. Beware of indifference and of neglect in what concerns your spiritual welfare. Our Lord counted no cost too great to save you; and will you be heedless of the blessings of redemption which He purchased for you by so many humiliations and sufferings? Ah, no; love the ways by which God would lead you, and wisely do the works that He asks at your hands.

II. It is sad to reflect that, although the price of redemption has been paid, and although its fruits are available for

man's salvation, so many men are notwithstanding lost. The fault is their own. They will not live in the practice of their faith, or avail themselves of the helps of religion; they disregard God's most holy and wise commandments and the salutary precepts of His Church. What wonder, then, is it if they are not saved? for they fail to fulfil the conditions of salvation. Our Lord has through the Holy Sacraments opened to men the fountains of grace, but men do not approach them to obtain refreshment for their souls. By the shedding of His Blood He has prepared a fountain for the washing of the sinner, but sinners remain uncleansed. He has prepared His table, and commanded men to partake of the Bread of life, but they abstain from it, and their souls are famished. He offers them the enlightenment of His holy Word, but they love only worldly wisdom, and they remain in darkness. In what way, then, it may be asked, do they avail themselves of the abundant fruits of redemption?

Devout Christian, take warning by the lamentable neglect that you have been considering. Shall God speak to you, and will you not listen? Shall He provide for you His desirable bounties, and will you not partake of them? Ah, be not so unwise. 'Let thy thoughts be upon the precepts of God, and meditate continually on His commandments' (Ecclus. vi. 37), that you may enjoy the fruits of life.

III. Our Lord says: 'Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire' (St. Matt. vii. 19). We learn from these words that if we do not avail ourselves of the fruits of redemption, we shall fall under God's wrath, and under the sentence of everlasting punishment from which redemption should save us. We cannot despise God's merciful designs with impunity. How sad, then, will be the lot of all impenitent sinners! The holy writer says: 'The way of sinners is made plain with stones, and in their end is Hell, and darkness, and pains' (Ecclus. xxi. 11). Do they think to make everything easy and pleasant for themselves? They shall be undeceived when at their death they shall see that they

were all the while preparing for themselves endless woe. How foolish are all Christians who wickedly close their ears to that teaching of our Lord which tells them of the terrible consequences of disobeying God's commandments, of disregarding the injunctions of the Church, and of neglecting the means of salvation! If our Lord has made most consoling promises, and given most comforting assurances, they are for the faithful and for the fervent, but not for men who practically despise the fruits of redemption.

Devout Christian, beware of neglect in what concerns your salvation. See if you yield to your Saviour the fruits of His grace, or if your soul is unproductive. Pray to Mary to obtain for you the grace of true devotedness to her Divine Son, fidelity to His grace, and zeal for your own sanctification. How much depends upon these things! Recognize their value.

December 24.

BORN AT BETHLEHEM.

I. When the Angels had departed and their song had died away, the shepherds said to one another: 'Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass' (St. Luke ii. 15). Those lowly shepherds were to be witnesses of no insignificant event upon their entering the miserable stable to which the Angels had directed them. The word that had come to pass was the word of promise spoken by God, first of all, in Eden to Adam and Eve, then renewed in the promises made to Abraham—the word whose accomplishment was foretold by many prophets, and foreshadowed by many types and figures; the word, finally, whose realization was longed for during several thousand years of earnest expectation. David expressed his longing to behold it when he said: 'My eyes have fainted after Thy salvation'; and Isaias prayed for its accomplishment, saying: 'Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above: and let the clouds rain the just: let the earth be opened, and bud forth a Saviour.' O happy shepherds, you went over to Bethlehem to find the Lamb of God, and to see those things of which our Lord afterwards said: 'Many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them.'

Devout Christian, accompany in spirit the shepherds, and look with wonder and admiration upon the spectacle that met their gaze upon their entering the rude and comfortless stable. Let the light of faith fall upon the scene witnessed in that dark and unwholesome cave. You breathe an atmosphere of mystery. Divinity and humanity are united: the magnificence of the one and the lowliness of the other are blended in the Person of God the Son, born in that stable.

II. Mary and Joseph arrived at Bethlehem to enrol their names in the list of the children of David's house. Unable to obtain lodging elsewhere, they betook themselves to a deserted stable. There, in that shelter for beasts, the Divine Saviour of the world was born. Perhaps two beasts were in the stable at the time, for we read in the prophecy of Isaias: 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel hath not known Me' (Isa. i. 3). Let St. John reveal the mystery to us. He begins by carrying us back to when God alone was: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' We fall down in adoration before the Word, because the Word is God. St. John says again: 'And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.' Yes, the Word made flesh is born at Bethlehem, born of Mary. We are in spirit at Bethlehem, and there in spirit we fall down and adore, because the Child there is the Word made flesh, and the Word is God. The Child there is the Word, the Almighty, the All-wise, the All-perfect God. The Infant is 'wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger' (St. Luke ii. 12). The Word of God has come in all lowliness and condescension; He has assumed human nature, and He will never leave it aside, but will retain it for all eternity: 'Jesus Christ yesterday and to-day: and the same for ever' (Heb. xiii. 8). He has come in love and mercy; for He has come to satisfy for the sins committed against Himself, and to save those who committed them.

Devout Christian, admire the wonders displayed in this mystery of Christ's birth. Let the song of the Angels be also yours: 'Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace to men of goodwill.' Rejoice and say with David: 'Sing ye to the Lord a new canticle: sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing ye to the Lord and bless His Name: show forth His salvation from day to day' (Ps. xcv. 1, 2).

III. The Word of God has assumed human nature. The Son of God has become the Son of Mary. How many are the ways and forms of His condescension! See how He humbles Himself! In Bethlehem He is a little Infant, and He puts Himself in a position of dependence on His

own creatures. We see how Mary and Joseph raise Him up and place Him down. They feed Him and clothe Him. Yet He is the Divine Creator of all things: 'All things were made by Him: and without Him was made nothing that was made' (St. John i. 3). It is He Who has clothed the earth with beauty, and who has strewn the blue firmament with countless stars and poised them there. It is He upon Whom all creatures depend for their daily sustenance. He is the same Lord Who amidst thunder and lightning gave His law on Mount Sinai, when the Israelites said to Moses: 'Let not the Lord speak to us lest we die.' At Bethlehem we witness the mystery of His condescension and of His love. Our Lord Himself afterwards declared it in these words: 'God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son' (St. John iii. 16). We ask ourselves in astonishment: What earthly prince would sacrifice his son to save the lives of his rebellious and disgraced servants? And what son would submit himself for such a sacrifice?

Devout Christian, commemorate with joy and gratitude the mystery of your Saviour's birth at Bethlehem. Acknowledge our Lord as your heavenly King and Master. Express your love, and desire ever to manifest your loyalty. Ask Mary to speak to Jesus for you, to obtain for you those fruits of His Incarnation and Redemption which are destined for you to keep you from sin and to bring you to everlasting life.

December 25.

'PEACE TO MEN OF GOODWILL.'

I. THE Christmas joy-bells usher in the reign of peace; for the coming of our Lord was to bring to men blessings without which the reign of woe would have continued. Our Lord came as the Prince of Peace (Isa. ix. 6) to repair man's fall, to redeem our souls, and to be our Saviour. The day of the fall was a woeful day. Man lost the friendship of God, the clear light of truth, the joy of holy innocence, the earthly paradise, and the everlasting inheritance. The Heaven-given gifts and privileges which he lost were succeeded by darkness, disorder, rebellion, frailty, perversity, and misery in his whole nature, and with death and the loss of God as the direst of punishments. To repair the evil thus brought upon the human race was beyond man's power. Our Lord came to effect this work of mercy and compassion. It was not given to Adam and Eve or to the Patriarchs, to witness its accomplishment. How great would have been their joy if this favour had been accorded to them! Because of the fall men came under the sentence of death, but our Lord declared: 'I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly' (St. John x. 10). O unspeakable Goodness! O more than plenteous Redemption! Man is raised up, and richer blessings are prepared for him than if he had never fallen. The evil is undone, Satan's work is brought to naught, grace is restored, and with it the heavenly inheritance.

Devout Christian, return thanks to your loving Saviour, Who would not see you left to perish. As the Good Shepherd, He places you on His shoulders, and brings you back to the fold. The fall has been repaired, and peace is restored.

II. Our Lord's birth brought peace to men of goodwill

because He came to redeem their souls. This magnificent work, which extends to every generation of men, was to cost a great price; but our Lord came into the world prepared to pay the price demanded. The prophet declared: 'The chastisement of our peace was upon Him' (Isa. liii. 5). If our Lord is the Good Shepherd, He is also the Lamb of God; for He is to be sacrificed for our redemption. No atoning sacrifice had yet been offered to God; the time for pledges and prefigurements had come to an end; they must at last be fulfilled. Jesus, therefore, was born into the world to be the Lamb that should take away the sins of the world. Holy Church sings: 'Lord, Thou hast blessed Thy land; Thou hast turned away the captivity of Jacob. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people: Thou hast covered all their sins. . . . Thou wilt turn, O God, and bring us to life, and Thy people shall rejoice in Thee' (Ps. lxxxiv. 2, 3, 7). Our Lord came to break the bonds of Satan and of our own wickedness, and to lead captivity captive. The thraldom of Satan was to be exchanged for the sweet bonds of Divine love.

Devout Christian, salute your heavenly deliverer with the noble title of Redeemer. The grace of His redemption brings you peace, and comforts you with hope. Lift up your soul to relish your liberty, and to seek the higher gifts. Our Lord said: 'If therefore the Son shall make you free you shall be free indeed' (St. John viii. 36). Be not brought again into bondage through the neglect of grace, or through the heedlessness about your salvation.

III. Our Lord came into the world as the Saviour of men, and through His 'salvation' (St. Luke ii. 30) to procure for them an everlasting peace. The Angel said to the shepherds: 'This day is born to you a Saviour.' Our Lord made over to men His saving merits. Therefore St. Paul says: 'But you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. vi. 11). . . . 'There is now therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus' (Rom. viii. 1). As our loving Saviour, our Lord lavishes upon us His graces (2 Cor. ix. 8), instructing us, and drawing us in the path of

holy living, that we may not be contaminated by the evil there is in the world, but that we may realize the blessing of salvation. See the Saints who through His grace have reached the harbour of eternal peace and rest! We are invited to share their bliss, and the fault will be our own if we fail to attain it. Our Lord provides us amply with every necessary help. Therefore St. Paul says: 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' (Heb. ii. 3). Alas! that so many men, victims of worldliness, spiritual indifference, and vice, disregard grace, neglect the duties of religion, and fail to secure their salvation!

Devout Christian, rejoice with all the just in the birth of your Saviour, and commemorate with joy and thankfulness His wonderful works. Sing with Holy Church: 'He hath remembered His mercy and His truth toward the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God' (Ps. xcvii. 3). Salute with loving devotion your heavenly Mother Mary; rejoice in her joy at the Nativity, and beseech her to plead for you with her Divine Son for grace never to forget His mercies, and never to neglect the demands of His love and service.

December 26.

SENTIMENTS AT CHRISTMAS.

I. We should commemorate the events of our Saviour's birth with sentiments of faith and piety, of joy, and of gratitude and love. Our faith and piety should lead us to reflect upon these events, and to lift the veil to discover the Divine designs underlying them. We are familiar with the events of Christ's birth, but let us in spirit see them enacted, let us dwell upon them and the lessons they teach. Let us therefore look upon the Divine Infant in the manger; let us consider the conduct of Mary and Joseph; let us listen to the hymn of the Angels; let us follow the shepherds to the stable, and note how Mary treasures up in her heart all they recount. All this will impress the events upon our mind, and help to inspire us with devotion. All this may be described as the body of the mystery: where is the soul? In other words, what is its object and meaning? God has not assumed human nature except for some all-worthy and admirable purpose; nor has He come into the world in the manner we have in spirit witnessed, except to convey some admirable lessons. As to the purpose, we know and believe that God became man to satisfy Divine justice, to wash out man's sin, and to reconcile him to God, and to restore to him his lost heavenly inheritance. As to the lessons taught, they are those of our Lord's many virtues, especially of His zeal for His Father's glory, of His love for men, and of His humility.

Devout Christian, renew your faith in the events of Christ's birth, and in the loving purposes of the Incarnation. Desire by a devout life to avail yourself of the blessings intended for you in this world, and to co-operate with God in His designs for your salvation in the world to come.

II. The Church celebrates with joy the commemoration

of our Saviour's birth—and with good reason. All Christians should view it with sentiments of joy. For several thousand years the world waited in expectation of our Lord's coming; the patriarchs received with gratitude and comfort the promises of His coming; the prophets strained their eyes looking for the great event, and they kept alive among the faithful both the hope of our Lord's coming and the desire to see Him. His coming is the most important event chronicled in the whole history of creation, and we know how man's salvation depended upon it. We should then rejoice in the event viewed both as to itself and as to its results. In the event itself we recognize how God the Son has assumed our nature and come among us. Let us praise Him in the words of David: 'O Lord our God, how admirable is Thy Name in the whole earth! . . . What is man that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that Thou visitest him?' (Ps. viii. 2, 5). 'Thou hast visited the earth, and hast plentifully watered it; Thou hast many ways enriched it' (Ps. lxiv. 10). In the results of our Lord's coming we see man's reconciliation, his present peace, and his future everlasting glory. 'Thou wilt turn, O Lord, and bring us to life: and Thy people shall rejoice in Thee' (Ps. lxxxiv. 7). Let us say with Zachary: 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: because He hath visited and wrought the redemption of His people' (St. Luke i. 68). Let us listen to the Angel who addressed the shepherds, saying: 'Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people.' All are called to participate in the blessings our Lord came to bestow on mankind; all should therefore rejoice in commemorating His coming.

Devout Christian, seek ever to drive from your heart sentiments of sadness, and especially when you celebrate the works of God's love and mercy. Let sentiments of joy flood your soul when you reflect upon the innumerable blessings which proceed from God's infinite bounty through the mystery of the Incarnation. 'Rejoice in the Lord always' (Phil. iv. 4).

III. The commemoration of our Lord's birth should

draw from the hearts of all Christians sentiments of gratitude and love. God did not despise man when he fell: He did not forget him for ever. No; He sent His only-begotten Son, clothed in our humanity, to become our Brother, and to give His life for our salvation. We see His Divine Son an Infant in the manger, looking upon us with human eyes, loving us with a human heart. We contemplate with wonder the Divine condescensions, and we marvel at the poverty and privations embraced for our sake by God Himself. Have we no words of gratitude to utter? Are we going to take all this as a matter of course? and not as a prodigy of love and goodness for which no words of thankfulness would be adequate? Let us borrow expressions from holy David, and say: 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all He hath done for thee. Who forgiveth all thy iniquities: who healeth all thy diseases. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction: who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion' (Ps. cii. 2-4). God will not prize any return we may strive to make for all His goodness displayed in the Incarnation if it be not accompanied by our love. Every element and quality of worship and dutifulness which He seeks at our hands is comprised in love; for if we truly love our Divine Saviour, we shall recognize the service we owe Him, and we shall seek to please Him; we shall frequently address ourselves to Him; we shall avoid everything that might offend Him, and we shall desire to go to Him. This is true Christian love—a love that will tend to purify and sanctify life, that will impart earnestness to religion, and that will support us under the trials of life.

Devout Christian, let your service of God be prompted by gratitude and love. Our Lord's Incarnation should draw from your heart sentiments of gratitude and love. Beseech Mary to present you to Jesus as her devout client, and to obtain for you the joy of His blessing and the comfort of His love.

December 27.

OUR PASSING YEARS.

I. We are ever advancing in life, and our years return not; we shall not be able to live them over again. Nature's lessons confirm what, on this matter, we learn from God's Holy Word. The brightness of the sun that has brought us joy in the daytime presently fades gradually away, and we are left in the gloomy darkness of the night. The warmth, the verdure, and the flowers of the cheering summer presently give place to the chilliness, the dulness, and the storms of the winter. These changes, ever succeeding one another, indicate the flow of time. But while day and night, and the various seasons, depart to be succeeded by others, so that it may be said that they return again, our own lifetime progresses slowly, steadily, and surely, adding daily maturity to our age. It will not, however, be renewed again in this world; it runs its course, and comes finally to its close. This is according to God's providence for men. David says: 'He remembered that they are flesh, a wind that goeth and returneth not' (Ps. lxxvii. 39). If our life shall have been spent well, it shall be renewed as the eagle's (Ps. cii. 5) in the world to come.

Devout Christian, bow humbly and resignedly to God's dispensations in all that concerns your passing years. Receive them thankfully from Him, and spend them for Him and according to His will. Then will your years be years of blessing. Ever remember that they will draw to a close, and let this remembrance lead you to live always wisely, discreetly, and religiously.

II. As Christians advance in years, they must be careful not to fall away from religious fervour, from practical piety, and from virtuous conduct. They must advance, and not go back, in everything that leads to the kingdom

of God; they must be strengthened, and not weakened, in faith, hope, and charity. The holy writer says: 'The fear of God is the beginning of his love: and the beginning of faith is to be fast joined unto it' (Ecclus. xxv. 16). And St. Paul says: 'Charity never falleth away' (1 Cor. xiii. 8). Christians, as their years pass, must not change their appreciation of what is good and profitable, to fall away and take delight in what is hurtful or dangerous to their virtue. The holy writer says: 'Health of the soul in holiness of justice is better than all gold and silver' (Ecclus. xxx. 15). 'Be not weary,' says St. Paul, 'in well-doing' (2 Thess. iii. 13). During these passing years Christians must throw in their seeds into the good ground, and they must do so continuously and abundantly, that they may reap an abundant harvest. These years are as the seed-time; they are the season for grace, for merit, for mercy, for trial, and for faithful service. They must not be wasted or lost; they must not be misspent.

Devout Christian, prize the present time, prize these passing years. You may become every day dearer to God by reason of your constancy in loving Him; you may every day add to your merit, and therefore to your reward, by your faithful service of Him. Precious years! They will also be happy years if they be spent well and wisely. Pray for the grace of constancy in God's service.

III. Christians should so spend their passing years as to prepare comfort for themselves when these years shall have passed. They are now building for themselves the home in which they are to find rest when this life is over. When they reach the close of their earthly career and are about to die, they will experience comfort or misgiving, according to the lifelong preparation that they will have made for that supreme moment. How happy shall then be the true servants of God who have found their pleasure in what was good and pleasing to Him! And how wretched shall then be men who have broken God's law, who have neglected the duties of religion, and who have loved inordinately the creatures of the world and its vanities! O years that are past! they will say, would that we could

live them over again! Let Christians take warning by their misery and apprehension. It is written: 'He that rejecteth wisdom, and discipline, is unhappy: and their hope is vain, and their labours without fruit, and their works unprofitable' (Wisd. iii. 11).

Devout Christian, thank God for all His mercies during your passing years, and consecrate to His faithful service those that yet remain to you. Pray that you may ever love duty, religion, and virtue, and that you may never turn away from God, Who is your only and sovereign Good. Beseech Mary, your loving heavenly Protectress, to obtain for you an increase of charity, and a love of everything that is pleasing to God, that you may despise every demand upon your affections that would lead you from Him.

December 28.

LOOKING TO THE END.

I. CHRISTIANS imbued with a lively faith and with a practical understanding of their high destiny direct their lives to the goal of everlasting blessedness that is ever before them. Others who realize less fully God's loving designs permit themselves to be so far engrossed with worldly pursuits and empty frivolities as to devote little or no thought or effort to the great end for which life has been given them. The mariner keeps his glance directed towards the port to which he is sailing, and he steers his course thither; but these men dally on the waterway of life purposelessly or vainly, exposing themselves to shipwreck and destruction. Devout Christians may experience storms and troubles on the way, but on the bright horizon is the haven of rest and of peace towards which they ever look hopefully and confidently. There God awaits them to bring them into His kingdom. Let not men attach themselves inordinately to human friendships or to passing pleasures, or to anything that may turn them aside from the goal of everlasting bliss that is before them. St. John says: 'Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world . . . the world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof. But he that doth the will of God abideth for ever' (1 St. John ii. 15, 17).

Devout Christian, fix your heart on God and on everlasting joys. Let not the transient joys of life engross your affections, but ever look to the end that is before you—the heavenly destiny, the lot of the Saints.

II. Christian wayfarers looking to the end of their journeying embrace with dutiful resignation the labours and fatigues of their present condition, and reckon that time well spent which is employed in fulfilling the duties

of their state of life. They do not measure their success or their happiness by any worldly standard, but by the standard of conformity with the Divine will. They are therefore content with their lot, and their only fear is that of falling from grace. They can live without continual change and excitement, and they do not consider that these things make for their spiritual good. They reckon of value everything that can help them to attain the end for which they have been created, and useless or pernicious everything that may prove an obstacle to its attainment. They are not disheartened by ill-success or by untoward events, so long as these do not dim the bright vision of the future; and they praise God in joy and in sorrow, beseeching Him ever for His help and blessing. Their prayer is like to David's when he said: 'We have rejoiced, and are delighted all our days. We have rejoiced for the days in which Thou hast humbled us: for the years in which we have seen evils. Look upon Thy servants, and upon their works' (Ps. lxxxix. 14-16).

Devout Christian, walk ever in the way that leads to a happy death and to a glorious eternity. You will not miss the goal if you despise every unworthy attraction, and if you strive to sanctify your days by dutifulness, patience, and prayer.

III. What are the desires of Christians who are ever looking to the end? They wish to live only as long as is pleasing to God, for the real longing of their heart is for God and for eternal life. A dangerous sickness does not therefore fill them with terror and alarm, for they dutifully embrace all God's dispensations. There is no disloyalty to their relatives and friends if they are willing to leave them, for they love God above all, and they recognize Him as their Last End. They desire to attain what is everything to them—namely, the glorious destiny for which they have been created, the possession of the kingdom prepared for them by their Heavenly Father, and everlasting union with God. What are all earthly considerations in comparison with these? While awaiting God's good pleasure as to the time and manner of their

departure from this world, they keep treasured up in their hearts their heavenly aspirations, and they strive to take their place becomingly in the path of life marked out for them by Providence.

Devout Christian, you cannot aspire to anything so noble and so necessary to your happiness as God. Say with David from your heart: 'As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters: so my soul panteth after Thee, O God. . . . When shall I come and appear before the face of God?' (Ps. xli. 2, 3). Let not the vain attractions of the world turn your glance from the joys of everlasting life prepared for you. Pray to Mary to obtain for you the grace to love innocence of life, to practise piety, and to be faithful to God amidst the vicissitudes of your earthly existence, that you may reach the blessedness you hope for.

December 29.

'BEHOLD, I COME QUICKLY.'

I. Our present existence is shrouded in mystery. Not only are there deep mysteries in the teachings of Divine revelation, and in the ways by which God has decreed to impart grace to our souls, but there is a mystery about life itself, and an impenetrable obscurity about death. Our Lord, Who is the True Light come to enlighten all men, has not deigned to lift the veil of life that we may see its close. He would have us perfect ourselves now at the present, so that we may be prepared for the future. In several of His discourses He warned men concerning the uncertainty of death. He told them that it would come upon them all unawares, even as a thief in the night-time, and that they should therefore be ever ready for it. Moreover, He declares that it will come quickly. To some it will come more quickly than to others; but, at its longest, life is but short, especially when we compare it with eternity. St. James (iv. 15) speaks of life as 'a vapour which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards shall vanish away.' Men when dying, when their lifetime is bordering on the eternal years, realize how quickly life has passed. Christians should therefore strive to convince themselves now that life is gradually and even quickly escaping from their grasp.

Devout Christian, your few years are numbered, but you do not know their number. They may be few, and even very few, or they may be many. Be resolved to use them according to God's designs in giving them, and if you do this, you will live in security and in peace. Pray for the grace to spend your years well. Spend your days well, and all will be well.

II. Even in the midst of life Christians have some ex-

perience of its brevity, and they realize the certainty of death. How many eyes that they have seen glisten with the gladness of life are closed in death! How many hands that they have grasped in token of friendship are cold in the grave! How many gay voices that once cheered them are silent in the tomb! Christians look back upon their own past lifetime, and how short it seems! They may say with David: 'Man's days are as grass; as the flower of the field so shall he flourish' (Ps. cii. 15). The flowers sprout, thrive, and blossom, then they wither and die; and men start life in weakness, they acquire strength and vigour, then they sink into feebleness and die. Life is a struggle, and death a penalty. Such are the reflections which this subject forces upon us. We cannot escape from the conditions of the circumstances in which God has placed us. For whatever blessings attend us in our present existence we have to thank the goodness of God; and the miseries there are in it we have to attribute to the sins of man, whether our own, or those of our first parents, or of other men. But this life of trial passes quickly. A good life leads to a happy death, and a happy death heralds a glorious and everlasting future. Our Lord said to St. John: 'Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to his works. . . . And the Spirit and the Bride say: Come. And he that heareth, let him say: Come' (Apoc. xxii. 12, 17).

Devout Christian, our Lord invites you to be ready for His coming. Your years pass quickly by. Our Lord wishes you to be with Him. Prepare yourself by avoiding evil and by doing good. It will not be always darkness and sorrow: look forward with hope to the bright and happy future.

III. We do not know when our short life will come to an end. God asked Job: 'Didst thou know the number of thy days?' (Job xxxviii. 21). The holy writer says: 'The number of the days of men at the most are a hundred years: as a drop of water of the sea are they esteemed: and as a pebble of the sand, so are a few years compared with eternity' (Ecclus. xviii. 8). If men were to know the

number of their years, they might unwisely put off their preparation for the future; and their life might even be a wasted one and a dishonoured one. As, however, by a wise dispensation of Providence, we are left without any knowledge of how long we shall live, it behoves us to take our Lord's warning seriously to heart, and to live ever ready for our dissolution. Our Lord said: 'Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands, and you yourselves like to men who wait for their lord, when he shall return from the wedding: that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh, shall find watching' (St. Luke xii. 35-37). Sometimes death comes suddenly and unexpectedly; wise, then, shall we be if we keep ourselves ever ready.

Devout Christian, your days and your years are ever passing. Let your life be a pious and an honourable one. Guard your own soul from every danger of spiritual death, and be not a stumbling-block to others. Love the commandments of God and of His Church, and walk circumspectly in the paths of duty and of virtue. Then will you be ever ready for the summons that will call you from this world. Place your life under the protection of Mary, your heavenly Mother, and beseech her to obtain for you the grace to spend it ever according to the good pleasure of her Divine Son.

December 30.

'HOLD FAST THAT WHICH THOU HAST.'

I. THE daily solicitude of earnest Christians is not to fall away from grace. Their great concern is not how long they may live, but to live well. While hope comforts their soul, they yet ask themselves if they shall persevere. When David had said: 'I thought upon the days of old: and I had in my mind the eternal years' (Ps. lxxvi. 6), he went on to declare the resolution he had formed: 'Now have I begun: this is the change of the right hand of the Most High.' Earnest Christians are ever renewing their good resolutions, and in this way they save themselves from becoming remiss. Like steady oarsmen, they keep on ever plying their oars, and thus are they saved from drifting with the tide, if they do not also make headway against it. Our Lord sent a message to the Bishop of Philadelphia: 'Behold, I come quickly, hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown' (Apoc. iii. 11). Christians do not wish to lose the crown prepared for them; they must take care lest through remissness, or unguardedness, or relapse, they come to fall away from grace. They must ever renew their fervour, and be resolute in pursuing the ways of a good life.

Devout Christian, set a higher value upon the grace of God than upon all earthly considerations. If you must fear anything, let it be to lose grace. Be not misguided and led astray by evil propensities or by human respect. Be careful in all things not to offend God. Let it be your greatest joy to please Him, and you will not easily offend Him.

II. If Christians would save themselves from falling from grace and thus running the risk of losing their crown, they must be resolute in correcting their faults and in

combating their temptations. If they fail in doing these things, who does not see that grace will be undermined, and that they may lose it? It is lamentable to find Christians continuing for years repeating the same faults, and even increasing the number of their falls. What promise does this give of their final perseverance? Will not they too enter into themselves, as did David, and say: 'Now have I begun'? Let them not delay to begin the work of their sincere conversion. Our Lord says: 'Hold fast that which thou hast.' They will not hold it fast while they give way before their spiritual enemies and fail to correct their own faultiness. Their continued faultiness will prove an obstacle to the effectiveness of grace, and it will give rise to apprehension concerning their spiritual condition. In their case, moreover, temptations will lead to many falls, instead of giving occasion for many triumphs.

Devout Christian, be zealous for the better gifts; seek ever to protect your grace, and carefully avoid whatever would tend to lessen the efficacy of the many actual graces that God showers upon you. If you would not lose your crown, combat strenuously the temptations that assail you, and labour to correct and to overcome your weaknesses and your usual failings. Do not permit any delusion of passion or disorderly affection to hide the issues of spiritual life or of spiritual death that ever face you.

III. If Christians would be steadfast in grace, they must ever apply themselves with earnest piety to their spiritual duties. If they neglect the appointed means of grace, their souls will be deprived of that spiritual nourishment which imparts the vigour and support they need. The use of the necessary means is a condition of salvation. Experience shows that the neglect of prayer and of the Holy Sacraments is followed by a falling from grace. In spiritual warfare it is necessary to use spiritual weapons. How often, alas! men neglect their spiritual duties! They pretend that the demands of their profession or employment, and attention to their domestic or social duties, leave no time for them. This pretence is vain; what is wanting is the will to apply themselves to these spiritual duties—where

there is a will there will be a way. Earnest Christians, without neglecting what is demanded by their position or avocation in the world, can yet find ample time for prayer and for frequenting the Holy Sacraments.

Devout Christian, give to your spiritual duties their right place and order. Let not any worldly ties cause you to neglect what is necessary to insure your perseverance in grace. Pray to God to be ever your Helper and Protector, and to preserve you from the misfortune of ever losing His grace. Commit yourself to the care of your heavenly Mother, Mary, and ask her to obtain for you from her Divine Son the grace of an earnest zeal for your spiritual welfare. Let no earthly satisfaction come between you and your crown.

December 31.

FUTURE REST.

I. It should ever comfort Christians, in the midst of their labours and struggles, to call to mind that in the future life there will be everlasting repose. We are told again and again that we shall be rewarded according to our works: the future recompense will not be for those who have not worked, or for those whose works have been wicked and vain. St. Paul says: 'There remaineth therefore a day of rest for the people of God. . . . Let us hasten . . . to enter into that rest' (Heb. iv. 9, 11). The children of the Church are the people of God; but, alas! all are not true children of God, and not all shall see the day of rest. God complains by His Prophet: 'I have brought up children, . . . but they have despised Me' (Isa. i. 2). The rest of which the Apostle speaks is that true, heavenly, and everlasting repose which we all long for. St. John Chrysostom says that that is truly a place of rest from which have fled sorrow, sadness, and mourning, and where there are no solicitudes, labours, or strifes; but where there is nothing but peace, joy, rejoicing, pleasure, goodness, and meekness. There shall the just rest from their labours (Apoc. xiv. 13), and enter into everlasting rest (Ecclus. xxx. 17). This blessed repose is the object of the true Christian's longing and endeavour, and it is a fitting sequel to his present labours and struggles.

Devout Christian, fail not to work while it is day, that you may merit the heavenly rest. Bear up patiently and courageously during your present life of many trials. Your lot is not so hard as was that of many of the Saints. If you wish to enjoy the happy repose which is now their portion, be content to share their lot in this world of labour and sorrow. Pray for a spirit of resignation and contentment.

II. If Christians would hasten, as the Apostle bids them, to enter into their rest, they must not delay to remove all obstacles to their attainment of it. They must put away from themselves whatever deprives them of grace or prevents their return to the state of grace. They must remove ignorance of the Divine truths or of the commandments, or of the conditions of salvation. They must seek to put away their vices, and they must hold the mastery over their perverse inclinations. They must put away their sins by a sincere repentance, and repair their injustices. Finally, they must carefully avoid all dangerous occasions of sin. Having removed what obstructs the way that leads to heavenly peace and repose, they must further be prepared to fulfil all necessary conditions of salvation. They must live ever in faith, hope, and charity, and they must faithfully observe God's commandments. If they fall from grace, they must recover it by sincere repentance. Besides removing impediments and fulfilling what is strictly necessary, they should, moreover, endeavour to make sure their calling and election (2 St. Pet. i. 10). There should be a zeal for what will contribute to effect their salvation, especially by the frequent use of the Holy Sacraments and by assiduity in devotion. Let them take pattern by what men in worldly avocations do to attain success; such men never weary in effort or sacrifice.

Devout Christian, having turned your face towards the heavenly kingdom of everlasting rest, do not slacken your pace or divert your attention. Various obstacles may arise, and many difficulties may have to be contended with; but let nothing dishearten you. God, Who calls you to His kingdom, provides for you ample means of fulfilling your vocation. Let Him be ever your Friend and Protector, and cease not to implore His aid and blessing.

III. St. Paul bids Christians hasten to enter into their rest. There should be no delay in doing whatever is necessary to reach the harbour of repose, for time is short. No effort to reach it should be deemed too great. If God has deigned in His love and goodness to prepare a place for us in His kingdom, and to make our future reward

worthy of our every endeavour, it would be very unreasonable and very ungrateful on our part if we thought little of it, and if we showed ourselves unwilling to strive to attain it. Only think how truly the heavenly kingdom is styled 'a place of rest,' for our repose will be in God Himself, Who is both our First Beginning and our Last End. He demands that we should ever tend to Him, and seek our pleasure in Him and in His will; for He only can satisfy the otherwise insatiable desires of man's heart. Hasten, then, Christians, to the object of your desires and of your delights; to God, in Whom you will taste joy and pleasure in their very source; to God, in Whom you may repose in unending comfort, peace, and security. Why will you run after vanities? Why will you set your hearts upon creatures, while the great and beautiful Creator longs to give Himself to you, and to receive you into His everlasting embraces?

Devout Christian, do not lose sight of the day of rest prepared for the people of God, and lift up your desires to God, in Whom you will repose everlastingly if only you direct your life to His kingdom. Praise Him and thank Him for all His mercies, and for His loving designs for your everlasting welfare. Beseech Mary to obtain for you grace to fulfil those Divine designs. Let your love of her lead you to ever renewed effort to reach the heavenly kingdom.

Printed in England.

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COX, O. M. I., CHARLES

AUTHOR
Daily Reflections for Christians.

TITLE
Vol. II. July to December.

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